

PLUCK AND LUCK

STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the New York Post Office, November 7, 1898, by Frank Tousey.

No. 524.

NEW YORK, JUNE 17, 1908.

Price 5 Cents.

THE SMARTEST BOY IN PHILADELPHIA; OR, DICK ROLLINS' FIGHT FOR A LIVING.

By ALLYN DRAPER.



With his uninjured hand he pressed him to the wall, as far from the now blazing costumes as possible; with the other he strove to tear the bonds from his grasp, while raising his voice in one loud, agonized cry for help.

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The Smartest Boy in Philadelphia

OR,

Dick Rollins' Fight for a Living

By **Allyn Draper**

CHAPTER I.

A CRUSHING SENTENCE.

"And in pursuance of the power vested in me by the State of Pennsylvania, I do hereby sentence you, Samuel Rollins, to be confined in the Eastern Penitentiary at hard labor for the term of fifteen years. And may the fate which has overtaken you prove a warning to all who would rob the orphan of his birthright, and to all who would devour widows' houses, for many years to come."

Thus spoke Judge Ridgeway, and when he had finished speaking he sat down, and every eye in the court-room was fixed upon the still, cold features of the prisoner, who stood before him with bowed head as the crushing sentence was pronounced.

"Oh, dear! Oh, what shall I do! Oh, I can't bear it! I can never live down the shame and the disgrace!"

These words were whispered words, and no one but Gove Badger could by any possibility have heard them, yet all eyes were directed toward the obscure corner of the court-room, where sat Dick Rollins, the prisoner's son.

In the dull gray of the December afternoon the spectators could just make out that the dark, curly head was bent toward them; that the young, handsome and manly face, which had attracted so much attention during the long trial of Samuel Rollins for embezzlement, was buried in the hands, and though many—nay, all—felt sorry for the boy, none except his faithful friend, Gove Badger, who sat beside him, tried to comfort him by so much as a word.

"Say, Dick; say, old man, don't give way like that. I don't care if your dad did go crooked; I'm just as much your friend as ever I was, and I want you to understand it, too."

"Gove Badger! Don't you dare to speak so! My father is innocent, and with God's help I shall live to prove it."

Now every sign of weakness had vanished; Dick Rollins' head was raised, and he faced his friend with flashing eyes.

"Look here, Dick, I didn't mean anything. Of course your

father is innocent if you say so. Don't get mad, old fellow. You're my friend, and I'm going to stand by you. You just come right home with me."

"Oh, no, Gove, I can't do that."

"But you must; I insist upon it."

"Hush! Here comes an officer. I must see my father before they take him away."

The officer bore a kindly message from the judge to the intent that Dick was at liberty to accompany his father to the gate of the Eastern Penitentiary if he chose to do so; and thus it happened that we find Dick Rollins with his fight for a living all before him, standing in front of the prison on Fairmount avenue above Twenty-second street, in the good city of Philadelphia, just as the sun went down on that dull December day.

He was alone. The heavy gate of the gloomy fortress had clanged behind him.

From the lap of luxury Dick Rollins had suddenly been thrown upon his own resources, with nothing to take with him into the battle of life save a dollar-bill and a blasted name.

Stay, though! There was something else.

It was the memory of his father's last words as the gate of the Eastern Penitentiary closed behind him:

"I am innocent, Dick, and you never want to forget it. You alone can help me. I look to you to clear my name before the world."

It was a sacred trust, and Dick Rollins accepted it as such.

"I'll clear your name, father, if it takes my whole life to do it," Dick answered, weeping bitterly all the while.

"Good, my son. I trust you fully. Make a brave fight, and better days may come to us yet."

It was all over.

Dick Rollins' fight for a living, and that great fight to prove his father's innocence, had fairly begun.

It was a singular case. And that the boy's situation may be fully understood, we must pause in our story to briefly describe it, even at the risk of having our readers accuse us of being prosy and dull.

One year before, Samuel Rollins had been rich and respected by all who knew him. Now he was looked upon as a criminal, and all his possessions were swept away.

If you had asked Dick how it had all happened he could hardly have told you.

His father had retired from business before his earliest recollection, and so great was the confidence reposed in him that in his care several valuable estates had been placed, to be administered for the benefit of the widows and orphans of certain of his deceased friends.

Dick's mother had long been dead; brother and sisters he had none. Having no ties, Mr. Rollins had devoted himself to travel, placing Dick at Haverford College and supplying him with every comfort and luxury that money could buy.

It was upon the return of Samuel Rollins from a long journey in the wild Northwest that the blow fell upon him.

Upon his arrival at Philadelphia he found, to his astonishment, that his own private fortune, and much of the wealth which he held in trust for others, had been disposed of in a manner strange beyond belief.

When he called upon his trusted agents, he found that real estate stocks and bonds amounting to hundreds of thousands had been sold off, as they pretended, by his own order—transactions which he, on the other hand, claimed to know nothing about.

While Mr. Rollins claimed to have been absent from Philadelphia for a year, his agents claimed that he had visited them from time to time during that period, and ordered these sales; and to substantiate their claim produced document after document bearing his signature, both as an individual and as executor of the different estates.

The money resulting from these sales they further claimed to have paid to Mr. Rollins in person, exhibiting receipts duly signed for the same.

And to make the case still darker, there were a number of witnesses at the trial who positively swore that at the time Mr. Rollins claimed to have been traveling in Montana they had seen him daily at the Continental Hotel.

It was very strange—very mysterious.

What little property there was left Mr. Rollins had promptly surrendered. It was not enough, however, to make whole the estates he had care of, and the result had been his arrest and subsequent trial and conviction on charges of embezzlement and fraud.

Witnesses were brought from the West to prove that the doomed man had really been absent from Philadelphia.

They were outsworn by others who were equally positive that he had been in the city all the while.

If Mr. Rollins stated the truth then someone had most cleverly personated him with most marvelous skill.

But no one believed that he did tell the truth except Dick, and in the eyes of the world now Dick was nobody but the dishonored son of one of the meanest defaulters Philadelphia had ever produced.

Of course, Dick had left college and hurried to his father's side at the first beginning of the trouble.

Now that it was all over, he felt himself an outcast, shunned and despised by all who had fawned about him when he was rich and prosperous; and he had reason for feeling so, since many of his former companions had already shown him the cold shoulder.

"I've got to fight for my living now," thought the boy, as the car which he had boarded rolled along Fairmont avenue. "If I am going to succeed in tracking the scoundrel who has brought my father into all this trouble, I must keep up my health and strength. To keep up my health I must eat and sleep. Yes; first of all comes the fight for a living. I must

start out the very first thing to-morrow morning and look for work."

Now, Dick had been stopping at a small hotel in a by-street just behind the Broad street station.

When he left the car he, therefore, walked along Broad street, and started to pass through that singular thoroughfare, the vestibule of the new Public Building, which is always crowded with pedestrians, as everyone knows who knows anything about Philadelphia at all.

He had advanced about half the distance, when all at once he saw ahead of him in the act of entering at the other end of the vestibule a man whose face so strongly resembled his father's that it fairly took his breath away.

Could this be the mysterious person to whom his father owed the calamity which had befallen him?

Instantly Dick was seized with the idea that it was.

It was dark outside, but the electric lamps made it light enough in the vestibule.

No sooner did Dick see the man than the man seemed to see Dick.

He stopped—stared for a second—turned abruptly, and shot out of the vestibule as fast as he could go.

Without an instant's hesitation Dick darted out of the vestibule after him.

When he reached the street the man had disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIGHT BEGINS.

"Dick Rollins! By gracious, I'm glad to see you! Come in, old fellow, come right in."

And Gove Badger threw the front door wide open, and seizing Dick's hand shook it warmly as he drew him inside the house.

"Gove, I had to come. They won't let me stay at the — hotel any longer. They demanded money when I went there to-night, and I had none to give them. Then they ordered me out, and worst of all they are going to keep my trunk. Can I sleep with you a night or so, until I have a chance to turn myself round?"

"Sleep with me, Dick? Of course you can. As long as you have a mind to."

"But your father?"

"Oh, blame my father——" Here Gove lowered his voice and glanced cautiously behind him. "It makes no difference what he says, I shan't go back on my friends."

Now, Dick had never placed Gove Badger at the head of the list of those he called his friends.

There had been a dozen others whom he had thought more of than big, stupid Gove.

Yet during these dark days one and all of these had given him the cold shoulder, turning their back on him when they met him in the street; and now that he actually stood in need of a friend, Gove really seemed to be the only one left.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Jeshurun Badger, looking up from the Charitable Christian which he was perusing by the light of the evening lamp. "Dick Rollins, is it? Gorham, is it not rather late for visitors? We were just about to have evening prayers."

Then Mr. Badger laid the Charitable Christian on the table, and looked hard at his son, while Mrs. Badger stared, and the three Misses Badger tittered out loud.

Altogether it was a very unpleasant situation for Dick, who was listening outside in the hall.

"I asked Dick to stay with me to-night, and that's why he's here," answered Gove, doggedly.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Badger. "Ahem! Gorham, it strikes me that your bed is very small."

"It's big enough for two, father."

"I don't see it."

"I say it is, and Dick's going to stay."

"But I do not think it well for you to associate with the son of a——"

"Come in, Dick!" roared Gove, cutting his father's speech short, and before Dick could gain the outer door, he had seized him and dragged him into the room.

Now, this wasn't a very pleasant reception.

Dick, who had insisted upon waiting in the hall while his friend announced him, had overheard all that passed.

He would have left the house had it not been for Gove's interference, but once he found himself in the midst of the family circle, the Badgers received him civilly enough.

"You may stay a night or two, Richard," said Mr. Badger, looking hard over his spectacles. "After that we cannot accommodate you. If you will allow me to give my advice, the best thing you can do is to find a situation and go to work at once."

"It is what I intend to do, sir," replied Dick. "I've got to fight for my own living, and I'm ready to work at anything. Perhaps you can help me to find a place."

"Ahem!" said Mr. Badger. "Ahem! No, I can't, Richard. I would like to, but I can't. These are ticklish times; one must be careful who one recommends to one's business acquaintances. No, I do not think I could assist you in finding a position, but you may join us in evening prayers."

This was cold comfort; and while Dick looked very red and confused, and Gove as savage as a meat-axe, Mr. Jeshurun Badger prayed beautifully—for he was very pious—only Dick thought the prayer a little personal, since it alluded to those who had yielded to temptation; but then Mr. Badger wound up by speaking of the beauties of Christian charity, so after all he must have been a very good man indeed.

"Gove, I can't stay here after to-night," said Dick, disconsolately when a little later he found himself snug in bed with his friend in a little room above stairs.

"You can stay here just as long as you have a mind to. You mustn't mind my father."

"But I do mind him. I'm not going to stay, old fellow, after to-night, though I'm just as much obliged to you."

Then, out of regard for Gove's feelings, Dick changed the subject.

For two hours the boys lay, with the light still burning, talking over Dick's plans and projects, when all at once—it was just before midnight—the chamber door opened with a bang, and in stalked the good and pious Mr. Badger, with his face as black as a thunder-cloud on a summer's day.

"Dick Rollins, you get right out of here," he exclaimed in a loud, offensive tone. "I won't have you in my house even for one night. Put on your clothes and get out of here at once!"

"Sir!" cried Dick in amazement, sitting bolt upright in bed.

"I say get out! You understand the English language, I presume. Get out. I won't have you in my house. You shall not sleep with my son!"

Dick was thunderstruck, Gove speechless with indignation.

"He shan't go unless I go with him!" he roared, after an instant. "Father, you must be crazy! Didn't you say Dick might stay here? What in thunder do you mean?"

"I mean that I've found him out. I mean that he's as bad as his father. If you say another word, Gorham, I'll horsewhip you. Dick Rollins, you have a vast deal of impudence to

force yourself into my house. Don't you ever dare to show your face here again!"

Burning with rage and shame Dick hurried on his clothes, while Gove and his father stormed and railed at each other in the most disgraceful way.

Of the reason for his sudden change of front Mr. Badger would not give the slightest inkling.

As Dick left the room, Gove, who had dressed himself, too, tried to follow, but his father thrust him back inside and locked the door.

As he hurried downstairs, Dick could hear Gove kicking against the panels, and bellowing like an enraged bull for someone to come and let him out.

"Mr. Badger, I—I regret that I have intruded upon you," stammered poor Dick, when he had gained the outer door at last. "I can assure you, sir——"

"Get out, you young scoundrel!" roared the good man, interrupting him. "Get out! I won't hear a word!"

Then Dick was thrust through the open door without the slightest ceremony.

The door slammed behind him, and in a twinkling the hall gas was extinguished.

It was midnight.

Dick Rollins found himself turned upon the streets of Philadelphia without a penny in his pocket—friendless and alone.

What had happened to so suddenly turn a good man like Mr. Jeshurun Badger so bitterly against him?

Dick found himself utterly at a loss to imagine.

It looked just then very much as though all the world was against him—it did, indeed.

CHAPTER III.

DICK FINDS WORK, LOSES IT, AND GETS IT AGAIN.

"Want a clerk?" said Mr. Greenough gruffly, raising his shaggy eye-brows and staring hard in Dick Rollins' face.

"No, I don't know as we want a clerk, but we do want a stout fellow for helper about the store. I suppose, though, you are too high-toned for that."

Then Mr. Greenough laughed, and Mr. Graff, junior partner of the hardware firm of Greenough & Graff, on Market street, above Seventh, laughed too, and remarked that Dick was too much of a "Slim Jim" to go slinging hardware around, all of which was very discouraging indeed.

"I'm stronger than you think for, gentlemen," answered Dick, "and I'd be only too glad to come to you in any capacity. I've got my living to make, and I can't afford to be too particular. Any work that's honest will suit me."

"Come, that's the way I like to hear a fellow talk," said Mr. Greenough. "Graff, what do you say? Shall we give this young man a chance?"

"Do as you like. We need a helper, but perhaps he won't be willing to come at the price."

"You might try me, gentlemen."

"All right then. Porter's work to begin with at three dollars a week. Give you more at the end of six months, if you suit."

Dick Rollins' face beamed.

"I'll come, gentlemen," he said promptly. "When shall I begin?"

"Now," answered Mr. Greenough. "You can pull off your coat and get to work at once. Graff, you show him that pile of scrap iron in the cellar that wants to be shifted over against the other wall. But I say, boy, what's your name?"

"Dick Rollins."

The boy's voice trembled.

Already the mere fact of his being his father's son had cost him many chances which otherwise he might have had.

"Dick Rollins!" cried Mr. Greenough. "Dick Rollins, eh? Not the son of Sam Rollins that went up to the Eastern Penitentiary the other day, I suppose?"

Now this was hard for Dick—very hard, indeed.

He tried to speak, but somehow the words would not come; it seemed impossible for him to frame a reply.

Since the night Dick had been so unceremoniously turned out of the house of the pious Mr. Jeshurun Badger a week had elapsed. It had been the most trying week the boy had ever known.

That night Dick had spent in a certain cheap lodging-house in Sansom street.

A dreadful place where the charge was but ten cents for a bed. To pay for this he pawned his watch, and during the week which followed strained every nerve to find a job.

Though he visited most of his father's former friends, none would do anything for him. They had plenty of advice to give, and that was all.

On Tuesday Dick called upon Philadelphia's noble philanthropist, Mr. G. W. Childs, the editor of the Public Ledger, an old and warm friend of his father, at the office of the newspaper on the corner of Sixth and Chestnut streets.

He had never met Mr. Childs himself, and upon being shown into the presence of a stout, genial, benevolent-looking gentleman, who eyed him curiously, he was so nervous he could scarcely speak.

"So you are Samuel Rollins' son?" he said, pleasantly, when Dick had told his name. "Take a seat, please. What can I do for you? Want advice about getting into business, eh? Well, you ought to have no difficulty in Philadelphia. I began with-out a penny myself, and have worked my way up to what you see me now, and— But excuse me. Here is a gentleman to see me on important business. Call again to-morrow and I'll see what I can suggest."

Then before Dick knew what he was about, he stood in the street again, uncertain whether or no he had received a rebuff.

Had the boy adopted the proper course, he would have called upon Mr. Childs on the day following without fail, for no kinder-hearted man exists than the Ledger's chief.

On Wednesday, however, he obtained a situation with Barnes and Horseman, the well-known saddlers on Chestnut street below Ninth.

Here he worked the half of Thursday, when shortly after twelve o'clock Mr. Barnes summarily discharged him without assigning any reason whatever.

His dismissal was as peremptory as it had been from Mr. Badger's house, and as Dick had frankly stated his name and the fact that he was the son of his father, he found himself utterly at a loss to understand the cause.

Now it was Friday, and the money obtained from the pawning of the watch was almost gone.

Dick had not seen Gove Badger since, and such other acquaintances as he had chanced to meet had hurried past him, some with a careless nod, others pretending not to see him at all.

As matters stood it was highly important to Dick to get work at once. Hence the terror which seized him when the fatal question was put by Messrs. Greenough & Graff.

"I don't care," thought Dick, "I'm going to tell them the truth. No one shall ever say that I'm ashamed of my father—no, not even if I starve to death."

"So you are the son of Sam Rollins," said Mr. Greenough. "Well, I might have guessed it. However, you may go to work. Because the father went crooked it don't follow that the son

will. Off with your coat, young fellow, and show us what sort of stuff you are made of. If you suit us we'll soon find you a better berth."

Dick bit his lip, but made no answer.

It was hard work, and the wages were ridiculous.

Nevertheless he worked like a Trojan all that afternoon.

Before closing-up time came, he had transferred the immense pile of scrap iron from one side of the cellar to the other, and though not one of his fellow employees even spoke a pleasant word to him, he left the store feeling happier than he had in a week, supped on bread and coffee in a little hole-in-the-wall restaurant on Sansom street, and at an early hour turned into his ten-cent bed.

The next morning Dick was up bright and early.

A wash at the sink of the lodging-house, and another call at the hole-in-the-wall put him in shape for business, and upon leaving the restaurant he bent his steps toward the store of Greenough & Graff, feeling more encouraged than he had in a week.

Indeed, he actually caught himself whistling as he turned the corner of 7th and Market, when all at once he saw a crowd ahead of him staring at the ruins of what had once been the store of Greenough & Graff.

Dick Rollins leaned against a lamp-post and stared at the store in silent dismay.

Nothing was left but the front and rear walls with a heap of smoking rubbish between them.

A solitary engine stood alongside a hydrant on the opposite side of the way, with a hose stretched across the street, and there were three or four firemen directing upon the ruined interior a feeble stream.

"When did it catch fire?" Dick asked, feebly, of an old apple peddler who stood near him.

"Somewheres about midnight," was the answer. "They do say it wor set on fire, but, Lors! one can never tell."

Here was an end to all his hopes.

To attempt to speak with Mr. Greenough, who he could see dashing in and out among the crowd with his hat tilted back upon his head, would of course have amounted to nothing.

Indeed, Dick could see those who had been his fellow-employees for so brief a time gathered before the ruins, talking earnestly with one another, all in the same position as himself.

"The fates are against me," he thought, "but I must not despair. If I can't find a job in Philadelphia I'll know the reason. Here goes for another start."

And Dick Rollins hurried down Market street, anxious to leave the store of Greenough & Graff behind him as rapidly as possible. He felt as though he never wanted to see it again.

If Dick visited one store that day and inquired for work he visited a hundred.

It was all of no use.

He never even got so far as to tell his name.

No one showed any disposition to hire him at all.

Then night came, and he discovered that he had reached his last dime.

Matters were getting desperate.

It was no time to be over-particular, to pick and choose; and although utterly wearied by the efforts he had made during the day, Dick wandered down upon Delaware avenue that night, determined to earn something at least that would give him a lodging and bed.

It was a busy scene, for beside the great ships whose bowsprits projected far across the street between the covered piers, there was the hurrying crowd at the fruit market, who work night and day during two-thirds of the entire year.

In June it is strawberries, in July raspberries, in August blackberries until the peaches come in.

Now in December it was apples, potatoes and onions—the latter not exactly fruit, perhaps—but to handle the great piles of baskets and barrels heaped up along the water's edge took many hands just the same.

Dick stopped at a little office alongside a covered pier bright with electric lights.

Inside was a marketman storming and raving because there were a thousand bushels of potatoes on the dock to be delivered that night, and no one to keep tally as they were loaded on the drays.

"I can keep tally for you, sir," said Dick, smartly, pushing his way toward the little office.

"The deuce you can?" said the marketman. "What's your name, young fellow?"

"Dick Rollins, sir."

"Want a job?"

"Indeed I do, sir. I happened to overhear you, and thought I would come in."

"Good enough!" said the marketman. "Glad to see a boy in these days who's got some gumption. That's the way I got my first job, by asking for it. Dick Rollins, take this book and pencil and lay outside there on the dock. Keep account of the number of baskets that go on the drays, and the number of each dray that takes a load. Do you understand?"

"Think I do, sir."

"Then be off with you. If the draymen load slower than they ought, don't be afraid to give them a blast—it's the only way to make 'em work."

Dick seized the book and pencil, and was out upon the dock in an instant.

He never stopped to inquire what wages the marketman proposed to pay him, not even to inquire his name.

He had come down on the docks for work, and he had found it.

It mattered not what the work was, he proposed to do it with all his might.

"Smart boy, that," he heard the marketman say, as he left the office, and Dick mentally resolved that before the night was over the marketman should think him smarter still.

The moon was shining brightly across the Delaware when Dick reached the place where the potatoes were piled.

Presently the marketman appeared and gave him more particular instructions. Dray after dray drove up. Dick superintended the loading, keeping a close account of the number of baskets and the numbers painted on the sides of the drays.

He attended strictly to business, speaking to no one except the draymen.

Indeed, he never stopped to inquire where so many potatoes were going to, and by a little past midnight the last basket of the great pile had been delivered to the drays.

"Got 'em done, eh?" said the marketman when Dick, so tired that he could scarcely put one foot before the other, presented himself at the little office with his list.

"Yes, sir. All done. Here's the list. I hope you'll find it correct."

"I make no doubt I shall," said the marketman. "You're a spry young chap, and you've done fust rate. Look around here Monday night, will you? Mebbe I shall have some more potatoes to ship."

Then he handed Dick a new, crisp, two-dollar bill, bade him good-night, and turned his attention to someone else.

How proud Dick felt! How light his step as he hurried back to the Sansom street lodging-house again.

It was the first money he had ever earned, and he could scarcely make up his mind to keep his hand out of his pocket, but kept feeling of the bill again and again as he walked along.

Next day was Sunday, and as there was no use in looking

for work on the Sabbath, Dick made himself look as respectable as possible.

In the afternoon he walked out to Fairmount Park, returning by sundown, and going early to bed.

Eight o'clock on Monday morning found Dick strolling up Chestnut street.

He had learned by experience now that it was of little use to apply for work at stores before nine or ten, since in the early morning the merchants were busy with their mail.

"I'll take every store on the north side of Chestnut street from the Schuylkill to the Delaware," thought Dick. "When I have finished one side of the street I'll take the other. If I don't strike anything by night I'll try the marketman again."

Just then he found himself opposite Independence Hall, that noble relic of Revolutionary days.

The front door was open, and several persons of decidedly rural appearance were passing in.

"Guess I'll step in and have a look at the old hall," muttered Dick. "I may as well put in my waiting time there as hanging about the streets."

Passing the statue of Washington, he ascended the four steps which led up to the old-fashioned doorway, entered, walked past the Liberty Bell which stands in the hall, and presently found himself standing outside the brass rail which separates the historic relics from the open space immediately inside the door.

When Dick entered a man followed just behind him.

He was a quiet, self-contained looking individual, who seemed to be buried in his own reflections, paying no attention to Dick or anyone else.

Dick walked up to the rail and stood looking at the old furniture used by the first Congress of the United States.

On the walls about him hung the portraits of our country's heroes; the relics of our early history as a nation were everywhere.

Of course, Dick had seen all these things many times before in happier and more prosperous days; but he found interest in gazing upon them again, and was leaning against the rail looking curiously about him, when all at once a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a voice said:

"Say, young man, ain't your name Dick Rollins?"

Dick, of course, turned his head immediately.

There stood the quiet-looking person who had entered the hall behind him.

More than this, the man was holding on to his shoulder, just as though he had no intention of letting go.

"Yes, my name is Dick Rollins. What do you want?"

"You," answered the man, throwing back the lapel of his coat and displaying a detective's shield. "I want you, Dick Rollins! I am a police detective. I have got a warrant for your arrest on a charge of setting fire on Friday night to the store of Greenough & Graff!"

CHAPTER IV.

DICK IN TROUBLE STILL.

"I set fire to the store of Greenough & Graff! You must be crazy to accuse me of a thing like that!"

Thus exclaimed Dick Rollins in the first excitement of the unjust accusation sprung upon him like a thunder-clap by the detective in Independence Hall.

The detective smiled cynically, but did not let go his hold on Dick's arm.

"That's all very well, young fellow," he said, in a low tone. "Maybe you did and maybe you didn't. Take my advice and

do as little jawing as possible, for every word you say to me is bound to be used against you if this here business ever comes afore a jury in court."

"But," cried Dick, hotly, "I am innocent of this terrible charge you are trying to fix upon me. Why, the night Greenough & Graff's store was burned I was asleep in Duffy's lodging house in Sansom street. I never knew a thing about the fire until I went around there to go to work next day. Ain't you mistaking me for someone else?"

"Not a bit of it," replied the detective, coolly, "not a bit of it. I've got a warrant for Dick Rollins, and you admit that you are Dick Rollins. Now, then, take my advice and don't talk any more. These people are looking at us and are beginning to suspect something. I don't want to disgrace you any more than I can avoid, so if you will promise to come along quietly I won't put my hand on you till we get into the street."

"I'll promise," said Dick, in a tone of despondency so marked that even the detective, hardened to the world and its ways though he was, felt his sympathies aroused.

"There, there, keep a stiff upper lip, my boy," he whispered, as they walked out of Independence Hall into Chestnut street. "It will never do to be down-hearted. Maybe you're innocent, as you say. Heaven knows—I don't. You don't look to me like a firebug, nohow, that I'm willing to admit."

They were walking down Chestnut street now, the detective's hand upon Dick's arm in such a way as to attract as little attention as possible.

By the time they reached the station-house Dick had grown calmer.

He ventured no further remark, however, nor did the detective speak to him again until they stood before the desk.

Here Dick's name, address and age were taken, and with the charge against him entered in a great book.

"Anything to say for yourself?" inquired the police sergeant behind the desk, biting the end of his pen. "You needn't say nothing unless you wish, I suppose you know."

"I have nothing to conceal, gentlemen," replied Dick, boldly. "I am poor and friendless, but I do assure you most solemnly that I am innocent of this terrible charge."

"Suppose we have to lock him up, Mr. Jenks?" said the sergeant, turning to the detective.

"I was thinking," answered the detective, "that it would be a shame to lock this young man up if he really is innocent. He looks like an honest, respectable fellow, and——"

Here Mr. Jenks dropped his voice to so low a pitch that Dick was unable to catch what was said.

"A good idea," said the sergeant aloud. "Take him down there at once. Justice Haggerty is sitting, and will examine him, I'm certain. I'll telephone Greenough & Graff. Let them tell their story. If it don't hang together, maybe the judge will dismiss the charge."

Then Dick was hurried before Justice Haggerty, and within half an hour found himself standing before that popular magistrate, with Mr. Greenough scowling at him between two lawyers, whom he had brought with him to press the charge.

What were they all talking about?

The room was hot and crowded with people.

From the position he occupied Dick could scarcely hear one word in ten, and his head spun round so he could not think.

He felt the disgrace of his position most keenly. Everyone in the crowd seemed to be staring straight at him—no doubt all believed him guilty and——

Suddenly, as the boy's eyes roamed from face to face, his gaze became fixed upon one particular face which seemed to separate itself from all the rest.

It was the face of his father, or a face most startlingly like it.

Out from among twenty others at the back of the room it seemed to stand forth, and then, all in an instant, it had disappeared.

"Dick Rollins!"

Dick started and stared wildly about him.

"The judge is speaking to you, young man," whispered the kind-hearted Mr. Jenks at his elbow.

As he moved forward in front of the justice, Dick shot a quick look toward the end of the room once more.

The face was nowhere to be seen.

"Dick Rollins, you are charged with setting fire to the store of Greenough & Graff on Friday night last," began Justice Haggerty, sternly. "You were seen lurking about the corner of Seventh and Market long after midnight. At half past two the fire broke out. Now, then, what have you to say for yourself in answer to this charge?"

"I can only say, your honor," answered Dick, as collectively as possible, "that I was not at the corner of Seventh and Market at all that night. After the store closed I went directly to my lodging place and was in bed by nine o'clock."

"Then you deny setting the fire?"

"Indeed I do, sir. I knew nothing at all about it until the next morning when I went to work."

"He don't tell the truth, your honor," spoke up Mr. Greenough, glaring savagely at Dick from over his spectacles. "My informant states positively that he was seen lurking about the store. Beside, that boy is the son of Samuel Rollins, the defaulter. He comes from bad stock."

"Who is your informant, Mr. Greenough?" demanded the justice.

"I prefer not to state, your honor."

"But you must state if you expect me to hold this young man. Understand that no matter whose son he is, he has equal rights with yourself under the law."

"Well, the fact is," began Mr. Greenough, hesitatingly, "I don't know my informant's name."

"Don't know his name?"

"No. I received a letter."

"Was there no name signed to the letter?"

"It was signed 'A Friend,' your honor."

Dick could hear Detective Jenks chuckle audibly as the justice replied:

"An anonymous letter! And you expect me to hold this boy on the strength of an anonymous letter? Mr. Greenough, I am more than surprised, sir. Dick Rollins, can you produce witnesses to prove that you were in bed by nine o'clock that night as you claim?"

"There is Mr. Duffy, who keeps the Sansom street lodging house, your honor. He saw me come in and go to bed."

"Let him be sent for," said the justice. "Next case!"

Duffy of the lodging house was sent for, and Duffy came.

Duffy's testimony was very direct and conclusive, moreover; and before Dick supposed that Justice Haggerty had half heard him out, the charge was summarily dismissed.

"The boy has a good case against you for false arrest, Mr. Greenough," said the justice, sternly, as the discomfited hardware merchant was slinking out of court.

But Dick had no thought of pressing his advantage.

He was only too greatly relieved to find himself free once more, and thanking Detective Jenks for the interest he had displayed, he hurried toward the door, his thoughts fixed solely upon the mysterious face.

During all the time he sat waiting for the arrival of Duffy of the lodging house his eyes had sought that face among the spectators who filled the court room.

They had not found it.

Nor could Dick find it now, although he lingered for some moments about the door.

Was the owner of the face responsible for the sea of troubles in which Dick found himself floundering?

It began to look so.

It did indeed.

CHAPTER V.

THE WALKING DELEGATE OBJECTS.

"Git out of me house! Git away wid yez! It's a respectable place I kape, an' there's no room in it for the likes of yez!"

Dick was thunderstruck.

Upon leaving Justice Haggerty's court he had considered it only right that he should go at once to the Sansom street lodging house and thank Duffy for getting him out of his desperate scrape; for somehow or other he had managed to lose him in the crowd.

But Duffy would have none of him.

He was engaged in sweeping out the lodging house when Dick entered, and raising the broom threateningly he motioned the boy away.

"But," stammered Dick, "I only wanted to tell you how much obliged to you I am, Mr. Duffy. I——"

"Git away wid yez!" cried Duffy. "It's the repetaytion of me establishment I was tryin' to save, not you. True for yez, ye wint to bed by nine, but how do I know ye didn't git up an' go out agin? Faix, an' for all I know to the contrary, ye might have set fire to the whole of Philadelphia the night. Don't ye dare show yer face about me house agin; an' as for yer duds, if they ain't out of here be this time to-morrer I'll pitch them in the street!"

Dick Rollins left the Sansom street lodging house so dazed that he could hardly think.

All the world seemed to be against him.

He was without even a place to sleep now, and utterly penniless.

His two dollars he had already paid over to Duffy, and he had hoped the man might be induced to trust him for a day or two until other dollars should be gained.

It was now noon, and from twelve o'clock until six Dick never lost a moment; but, true to his original plan, went from store to store on Chestnut street, trying to find work.

He was utterly unsuccessful.

Few would listen to him, and such as were inclined at first to lend an ear to his application, waved him summarily aside the instant he mentioned his name.

Night came on at last.

Dick had had neither dinner nor supper.

Faint for want of food and utterly discouraged, as a last resort he wandered down among the docks again, and presented himself to the marketman once more.

The marketman was busy with a customer when Dick entered the office.

Catching sight of the boy, he called out in his bluff fashion:

"Hello! Potatoes! That you? Get out there on the dock. There's only a hundred bushel to-night, but the carts will be here presently. I've been waiting for you to show up for the last half hour. A little more and your job would have gone to someone else."

Dick needed no second invitation.

Rough as were the manners of the marketman, he seemed now to be the only friend he had left on earth.

"I shall make enough to pay for a supper and a night's

lodging at all events," he thought; and away he hurried to the bulkhead along which the potato baskets lay piled.

Instead of being obliged to wait for the carts, Dick found several of them already on the ground waiting for him.

Now he felt like an old hand at the potato-loading business, and pulling out his book and pencil, he "tackled" the "hundred bushel" at once.

The first cart and the second had been loaded and dispatched, and Dick was well ahead with the third, when along the bulkhead, under the full blaze of the electric light, came a red-faced, coarse individual, followed by a number of rough-looking fellows with clay pipes between their teeth, who glared at Dick as though he had been some wild beast in a show.

The man was expensively dressed, wore a costly beaver overcoat and a high, shiny silk hat, while from his shirt front blazed a diamond whose radiance seemed to fairly throw the electric light into the shade.

Dick paid not the slightest attention either to the owner of the diamond or his followers, never for one instant imagining that their presence in any way concerned himself.

"Come, hurry up there, hurry up. Be lively with those baskets!" he shouted, seeing that the truckmen suddenly showed disposition to lag in their work.

The words had scarce left him, when he of the diamond slouched up and tapped him familiarly on the arm.

"Say, young feller, you don't belong to the potato handler's union, I s'pose?"

"What's that to you?" demanded Dick, drawing back.

"It's this to me; I'm the walking delegate," replied the man, superciliously. "An' them here gentlemen object to you takin' the bread out of their mouths. Don't yer know we're on strike?"

"On strike!"

"Yes, on strike. You understand me well enough, I guess."

"I'll be blest if I understand you!" retorted Dick, beginning to get angry. "What have I got to do with you or the Potato Handlers' Union either? Go on about your business and leave me attend to my work."

"Don't get sassy, young feller. 'Tain't so much you as these here scab truckmen I'm after. You helped load up here on Saturday, though, and I notify you now you've got to quit."

And indeed it began to look very much as though Dick would have to quit, for no sooner did the truckmen catch sight of the walking delegate, than they whipped up their horses without waiting for any more potatoes, and drove off with all possible speed.

"Now you get away out of this!" cried the delegate, giving Dick a rough push. "Don't you let me ketch you around the docks again or I'll break your head!"

Slap! Bang!

Before the walking delegate knew what had happened, Dick had planted a powerful blow between the eyes.

It was all wrong, no doubt, but Dick was desperate.

Had this man, who from appearances had never done an honest day's work in his life, any right to deprive him of the chance of earning the money he needed so much?

The instant Dick struck the delegate he was sorry he did it.

Both were standing close to the string-piece and as the man staggered back he managed to trip over something.

His heels went up, his high hat flew off, and over toppled the delegate into the Delaware, his diamond blazing like a lighthouse as he went.

"Kill the scab! kill the scab!" roared the potato handlers.

And while some ran for a boat-hook, by aid of which the delegate was presently fished out, all wet and dripping, others

sprang toward Dick Rollins, who at a glance saw the fix he was in.

It was of no use to think of argument.

In an instant the potato handlers would have been upon him, had not Dick, darting away, run across Delaware avenue like a deer.

"Kill the scab! kill the scab!" yelled the crowd that followed, and after the boy came, a perfect shower of stones, several striking him, but none, fortunately, hard enough to do any harm.

Just then it seemed to Dick as though all Philadelphia was after him.

Men dashed out of the numerous grogeries, the idlers along the wharves sprang forward to head him off.

"Heavens! I've got myself into a sweet fix now!" thought Dick. "If they catch me they'll kill me sure!"

But if Dick was ready with his fists he was also fleet of foot.

Right in front of him lay Lombard street, and out of Lombard street, just before you get to Third, runs a dark and narrow alley.

In the hope of getting through to Pine street, and thus giving his pursuers the slip, Dick dashed into the alley, when to his dismay he discovered that its end was up against a tumble-down tenement—that there was no way of getting into the other street at all.

There was no time for parley and but little even for thought.

Already the crowd had entered the alley, and their shouts could be heard close behind.

To retreat was impossible, and Dick made one dive through the open door of the tenement and dashed up the dark and dirty stairs.

It was a desperate resort, and under ordinary circumstances would have been an exceedingly foolish one.

Perhaps Dick had some faint notion that he would be able to reach the roof.

If so, he was doomed to speedy disappointment, for when he got up to the top floor he could discover no means of getting out upon the roof at all.

The hall was as dark as pitch, and from the fact of his meeting no one Dick began to think the house must be deserted.

"Kill the scab! kill the scab!" he could hear shouted below him, and there was a rush of many feet upon the stairs.

Now, it was as plain as A, B, C that Dick had run deliberately into a trap.

He tried door after door, but all were fastened.

Already his pursuers had gained the foot of the second flight, and their cries were drawing nearer and nearer.

Dick backed up against one of the doors, panting.

If he had got to fight he would fight desperately.

"I'll break some of their heads before they shall break mine," muttered the boy. "What right have they to hound me in this way, I'd like to know?"

In the very midst of his unspoken thoughts the door behind him suddenly opened, and a hand, grasping his coat-tails, drew him quickly into the room.

Before him was a youth of about his own age, with broad, pleasant countenance, coal-black eyes and hair of the same color standing straight all over his head.

As for his dress, it consisted, to all outward appearance, solely of a blue woolen shirt and a pair of shabby trousers; though alongside the fire, which burned brightly in an old rusty cooking stove, stood a pair of heavy boots and a pair of stockings, spread out as though to dry.

The room was almost without furniture.

It was small and very dirty. In many places the plastering had disappeared entirely, exposing the lathing in great patches, both on walls and ceiling.

In one corner stood an old bedstead, upon which was stretched a mattress and a pair of blankets. Beside this there was a table, a wooden chest and a solitary chair.

Altogether the room had a desperately poverty-stricken air, and would have looked anything but inviting to Dick Rollins in former days.

Now he saw in the frank, pleasant face before him a protector, in the shabby room a harbor of refuge from his pursuers outside.

"They are chasing me!" gasped Dick, in answer to the question. "I don't belong to their union. If they catch me they'll kill me, I think."

"No, they won't," replied the young man decidedly. "I saw them chasing you out the window—heard the row in the alley and looked out to see what it was all about, you know. Heard you run upstairs, too, and as I don't believe in twenty fellows setting on to one, I just thought I'd open the door and let you in."

"But what can you do?" whispered Dick. "They've gained the landing already—hark? There they are! Oh, I'm so sorry I've got you into trouble through helping me."

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The hall without was filled with the sound of trampling men now, and blow after blow was showered upon the door with powerful fists.

"Keep perfectly quiet," breathed the young man. "All the other rooms on the floor are vacant, and the doors are fastened. When they find it out, as they will presently, they'll think this one is vacant, too. If they should get in I guess you can fight a bit. I guess, too, they'll find Joe Rand no slouch at the fist."

Meanwhile the hubbub in the hall continued.

Presently someone shouted to know if anyone was behind the door which Joe Rand had taken precaution to lock and bolt.

To this request for information there was, of course, no answer returned; and after a time the footsteps of Dick's pursuers were heard descending the stairs; and by peering through the blinds he could see them slowly leave the alley, vowing vengeance as they went.

"They are gone, I guess," said Joe Rand, at last. "Now, then, young fellow, s'pose you tell me all about it, and who you are? And, by the same token, if you ain't too proud to eat a cold supper, all but the tea, for that's hot, suppose you sit down with me and have a bite."

Dick needed no second invitation.

Indeed, the scraps of cold meat, the loaf and the cheese, which before this he had observed spread out upon the table, had already drawn from him longing looks.

While they ate he told his story; told his name—told everything, in fact, but that which concerned his father, and about his own arrest, which, of course, he did not mention at all.

"So they won't let you work, eh?" said Joe Rand, with his mouth full of bread and cheese.

"Well, now, do you know I consider that confoundedly

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE CALLOWHILL STREET BRIDGE.

"Hello, young fellow! what's the row?"

The question was put in a low whisper by the person whose hand had drawn Dick Rollins through the door.

Of course Dick turned on the instant.

tyrannical. Blame these unions and their walking delegates, I say. They do more harm than good."

"I don't mean to interfere with anyone," said Dick, wearily. "All I want is a chance to earn an honest living. I'm sorry I struck the delegate, too. But when he pushed me it made me mad."

"Wish it had been me, I'd a knocked his whole head off," was the answer. "But what's the matter with you that you can't get work? Are you a stranger in Philadelphia?"

"Oh, no. I've always lived here."

"Always lived here! Then you must have friends?"

"No, I have no friends."

"But I don't understand."

"And I can't explain," replied Dick, sadly. "But I must be going. I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure."

"And I'm sure you are very welcome. I'll go with you as far as Lombard street, if you wish. There may be some of them fellers hanging round. Or perhaps our ways may lie together further than that. I'm going down to the Pennsylvania railroad to go to work."

"I don't know where I'm going," answered Dick, with a sigh. "One way is as good as another to me. I've got no place to sleep and no money. Upon my word I don't know what I am going to do."

"Is it as bad as that?" questioned the other, pausing in the act of pulling on his boots.

"It is as bad as that," answered Dick; "but I don't despair. There is another day coming. Perhaps it will bring me better luck."

Joe Rand finished pulling on his boots, and then put on his vest, hat and coat, gazing at Dick curiously all the while as though trying to make him out.

"Say, look here, I don't understand you at all," he bluntly said at last. "Have you been up to anything? You wear good clothes—a blame sight better than mine. I'd like to help you, and maybe I can. I'm down in the railroad yards myself braking on the shunting engine. You see, I've got no friends neither, and as I'm an independent sort of a chap, prefer to live alone by myself in this room to boarding. Maybe if I spoke to the superintendent he might take you on at something, though I must say you don't look as though you were up to our sort of work."

"I'm up to anything," replied Dick, eagerly. "That is anything honest, and I haven't been up to anything dishonest, as you hinted just now. If you will speak to the superintendent, and get me taken on in any capacity, I'll be your friend as long as I live."

"Come along, then," said Joe Rand, shortly. "I like you—I don't know why, but I do—there's no harm in trying it on."

And Dick went.

At the end of the alley they saw nothing of the belligerent members of the Potato Handlers' Union.

By and by they reached the great Callowhill street bridge, which passes over the Pennsylvania railroad and the Schuylkill river beyond.

"Say, you wait here," said Joe Rand. "I'd better strike the super alone, don't you see? I won't be a great while, for I'm sure to find him at this hour just below here. As to your bed to-night, don't worry about that. I've taken a big fancy to you, Dick Rollins, and if you are willing you shall bunk along with me. I turn in at half-past four."

Tears sprang into Dick's eyes.

"How can I ever thank you, Mr. Rand——"

"Don't call me Mister Rand. I'm Joe—that's enough. Now you just hold on here till I come back. I won't keep you waiting long."

Positively Dick felt light-hearted as he paced up and down

the bridge, watching the flaming headlights of the locomotives below.

He felt that he had found a friend. A rough one, it was true, but still a friend, and decidedly a friend in need.

There were but few persons passing, as the night had turned cold and the hour was late, and such as there were seemed intent upon their own affairs, hurrying past Dick without bestowing upon him so much as a glance.

Presently a man wrapped up to the eyes in a long, brown overcoat, and wearing a low slouch hat, stepped upon the bridge on the side where Dick Rollins stood leaning over the rail and looking down upon the tracks at a passing train.

Dick did not particularly observe him, nor did the man look at Dick until he came close behind him, when all at once he turned, seized the boy around the waist with powerful grip, and forced him headlong over the rail, directly in front of an approaching train.

Then, without waiting to ascertain the outcome of his dastardly action, the man in the brown overcoat shot rapidly across the Schuylkill and disappeared.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TABLES TURNED.

Joe Rand was what one might call a downright good fellow.

He was not well educated, he was not handsome. He was not even smart, as young men go nowadays, but he had for all that a heart beating away somewhere underneath his blue woollen shirt as big as the heart of an ox.

Born upon a farm way back among the Alleghanies—a bit of land all stones and stubble—Joe had been obliged to scratch for his living, as he graphically expressed it, ever since he was old enough to toddle about.

Now that father and mother were dead, sisters married, and brothers gone off West and to sea, there had been nothing for it when old Squire Baggs, the village money-lender, foreclosed the mortgage on the farm, but for Joe to "light out," too.

For a Pennsylvania boy to "light out" means to go to Philadelphia, of course.

Joe followed the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad, stealing a ride here, working his way there, until he reached the great city on the Delaware at last.

By this time all the conductors and most of the brakemen knew him, and it was through their influence that he obtained work on the road.

All this happened while Dick Rollins was still at Haverford College.

Joe had been brakeman on the shifting engine for more than a year now.

His duties were the most dangerous of all about the yard, for it was he who had the coupling of the freight cars to do when they were making up the trains.

When Joe Rand saw Dick come flying down the alley pursued by the members of the Potato Handler's Union, his great heart went out to him at once.

He saw in Dick a boy persecuted as he himself had been persecuted when he first came to Philadelphia, and he resolved to save him if he could.

Nearer acquaintance with Dick only served to increase Joe's liking.

Joe had long wanted a friend and a companion.

The rough, drinking, hard-swearing crowd about the freight yard were not his style at all.

Dick, according to his own confession, had no friends, and

Joe no sooner understood this than he resolved to "freeze on to him," as the saying goes.

"If I can only get him took on," thought Joe, as he hurried down into the freight yard, "it will be just the thing. He seems like a nice sort of a chap, and since he has got no better place can share my room just as well as not. He's just the fellow I've been wanting to meet."

Joe's first care was to report for duty; his next to see the superintendent of the yard, and present Dick's case.

"Seen Hammond go up the siding there beyond the Callow-hill bridge," said the engineer, in response to Joe's inquiry for the superintendent. "If you want to see him for anything you had better go now, for we are going to be very busy to-night."

Joe hurried off up the yard accordingly.

He found Mr. Hammond standing beside an open car superintending the unloading of some broken packages, full of business and very cross.

"What's that? Got a friend you want to get on the road?" he snapped in response to Joe's respectful question.

"No, got no room for him. Got more men than I know what to do with now."

"He's not a man, sir. He is only a boy about as old as I am. He'd be glad to take most anything, I guess."

"Only a boy! Does he belong to the union?"

"I don't think he does, sir."

"Then what's the use in your asking me to give him a job? You know well enough the men wouldn't let him work."

"He can join, I suppose, sir."

"Well, I can't bother about it now. I—merciful powers! That fellow will be killed!"

The sudden cry of the superintendent was echoed from a dozen throats.

Close alongside of where they stood was the main track of the Pennsylvania railroad, along which the New York express was tearing at great speed, when suddenly from the bridge above them a dark form came tumbling down.

It was a boy, and by the bright glare of the electric light Joe Rand, catching a glimpse of his face as he fell, saw to his amazement that the boy was none other than Dick.

As he fell he turned a complete somersault and landed upon the track on his back, directly in front of the approaching train.

"Stop him—stop him! He'll be killed!" the shout went up.

A mist passed over the superintendent's eyes—he was a kindly disposed man at heart—for Joe Rand, without the slightest hesitation, had leaped forward and was dashing in front of the train.

To try to stop him would have been useless.

The workmen about the yard stood aghast, for death in its most horrible form seemed the certain outcome of the boy's brave act.

Then came a shrieking of whistles, one agonized cry, and the next thing the superintendent knew the train had passed, and the workmen were gathered about something which lay stretched upon the ground at the side of the track.

Not Dick, but Joe.

Strange as it may seem, the brave fellow had succeeded perfectly in his bold undertaking.

He had dragged Dick, who was only stunned, from under the very wheels of the locomotive, but in the excitement of the moment had fallen headlong himself over a pile of loose rails, and lay helpless, his leg broken at the hip.

Now it was Dick who found himself called upon to play the part of protector.

Dick, who could not support himself, had now another to

support, and that other one whose claim upon him could not be overlooked.

Truly the tables had been most completely turned.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK MEETS MR. CHILDS AGAIN.

"Dick, is that you?"

"Yes, I've just come in."

"I'm glad of it. I've been listening for your footstep in the alley for the last hour."

"I hurried back as soon as I could, Joe. There were more potatoes than usual on the dock to-night, and of course I could not quit until they were all loaded. How are you feeling, old man?"

"Oh, not very comfortable. My leg feels as though it weighed a ton, with the splints and all this plaster around it, and I'm so tired of lying here flat on my back that I don't know what to do."

The scene was Joe Rand's humble room on the top floor of the old house at the end of the alley.

When on the night of the accident at the freight yard someone had suggested taking Joe to the hospital, Dick, although he had scarcely had time to recover from the shock of his fall, had immediately interfered.

"Take him to his own room," he said firmly. "I am a friend of his—I will take care of him."

Probably this was foolish, for at the hospital Joe could have been cared for much better.

But Dick had a certain horror of hospitals.

Did he not owe his life to Joe? Could he do less than to stand by him now—to nurse him back to health and strength. There were many questions asked and much confusion.

Meanwhile Joe, who remained entirely conscious, begged piteously that they should not take him to a hospital, of which he seemed to feel the same sense of dread as Dick.

So it came about that they carried the poor fellow to his room in the alley, where, cared for by Dick with all the tenderness of a brother, he had remained in a perfectly helpless condition ever since.

It was very hard for Dick, but he bore up bravely.

Indeed, the very responsibility under which he labored seemed to act as an incentive to spur him on.

The brakemen's union sent a doctor to Joe, who set his limb, but as he was only an apprentice, and, under their rules, entitled to no benefit, this was all they did.

No one came to see him, no one sent him a penny. As for the rich Pennsylvania railroad corporation, they sent him the trifle of wages due him by a messenger boy without even an inquiry concerning his condition; nothing but a hasty scrawl requesting him to sign the receipt.

"Corporations have no souls, they say," remarked Dick, as he read the letter. "Never mind, old man, I'll stand by you. After what you did for me you may rest assured that I shall never go back on you as long as I have two hands to work."

But it was very hard.

For the first week if it had not been for their humble neighbors, who were kindness itself, the boys would have been in a fair way to starve.

Joe needed such constant attention that Dick could not leave him for an instant during the day, but when night came some of the neighbors lent their aid after their own hard day's labor and Dick, who now felt equal to anything, rushed out and sold newspapers, picked up odd jobs here and there—any-

thing and everything that his hands could find to do he did with all his might.

And really it was surprising how many stray pennies the boy managed to pick up.

There is always work for willing hands in this world, and as for Dick, he was willingness itself.

Toward the end of the week the Potato-Handlers' Union adjusted their difference with Mr. Douglass, the marketman.

They were thoroughly beaten in their strike, and when Mr. Douglass set Dick at work again keeping tally, the men made no objection at all.

"You can work here every night this week, and next," said Mr. Douglass. "After that the potato season will be over, but you are a smart sort of a chap, Dick Rollins, and the ducking you gave that walking delegate was worth lots to me. Maybe I'll be able to find something else for you to do."

It was always a dollar and sometimes two.

It enabled Dick to keep the fire going in the rusty cooking-stove and to provide enough for himself and Joe to eat.

Thus stood matters on the night of which we write, when long after eleven o'clock, Dick came bustling in.

"Have you had your supper?" inquired Joe from the bed.

"Not a bite. Have you?"

"Oh, yes; old Mrs. Mulligan down at the end of the alley brought me in a big plateful of corn-beef and cabbage, and I tell you it tasted good. I've saved some for you, Dick. You'll find it keeping hot on the back of the stove."

"What did you do that for? Bread and cheese is supper enough for me, with a cup of coffee to wash it down."

"Why, what do you take me for, Dick Rollins?" cried Joe, his eyes glistening. "Do you think I could eat it all when I knew you'd come home hungry? And that after all you've done for me, too?"

"Pooh! What have I done for you, Joe? It's what you've done for me, I should say."

"No, it ain't. I'd have jumped in front of that engine to save anyone. It was nothing. If it hadn't been for those confounded old rails, I'd have come out all right."

"Oh, it's all very well to put it that way," replied Dick, laughing. "You forget that you were there on my business. That you had offered me half your bed before that scoundrel tipped me off of the bridge."

"It's awful strange," said Joe musingly, as Dick sat down to his supper. "I suppose you haven't the least idea yet who the fellow was?"

"Not the slightest."

"It couldn't have been the walking delegate that you pitched into the Delaware?"

"I don't think so. I am more inclined to believe that it was my poor father's mysterious enemy. I believe him to be at the bottom of all our troubles, Joe."

"You didn't see his face?"

"Never noticed him at all. I knew someone was coming up behind me, and that is about all I did know, when all at once I found myself whizzing over the rail."

Again and again had the boys discussed this, for long before Dick had told Joe everything relating to himself.

They could never arrive at any satisfactory conclusion, however, and after finishing his supper Dick washed up the dishes, locked the door, put out the light, and tumbled into bed.

"Dick?" said Joe, after a short interval of silence.

"What is it, Joe?"

"Are you asleep?"

"Not quite."

"Dick, you've been more than a brother to me. If I ever get about again I'll show you that I don't forget."

"Oh, go to sleep and don't bother yourself," replied Dick,

laughing. "You'd do as much for me if I were in your fix, I guess."

The next morning there was snow on the ground; not much, but just enough to make the streets look white.

Joe had not been able to sleep much during the night, owing to the pain in his leg, and Dick tumbled out of bed bright and early, made him a cup of hot coffee and hurried to the baker's for a fresh loaf of bread.

On the way back Dick remembered that this was visiting day at the Eastern Penitentiary.

He had been looking forward to an interview with his father most eagerly, and immediately after breakfast, having arranged to have an old woman in the neighborhood remain with Joe, he set out.

The meeting between father and son was most pathetic.

We shall not give it in detail, but only say that Dick left the penitentiary shortly after noon in a state of complete depression.

"Keep up the fight bravely, Dick," had been his father's last words. "Someone is working against us. During the lonely moments of my solitary confinement I have racked my brains to think who it can be, but in vain. Keep up a brave heart, my boy, and above all, keep a clean conscience and out of all this trouble God will surely bring some good at last."

But Dick never told his father of the attempt made upon his life.

"I must shake off these feelings before I go back to Joe," thought the boy as he walked away from the penitentiary. "I'm so near the park I guess I'll go in and take a brisk turn about. It will do me good, and by the time I get back to the alley I shall be quite myself again."

He accordingly walked directly up Fairmount avenue to the park entrance, and, passing the Lincoln monument, continued along by the winding paths as far as the Gerard avenue bridge, where he crossed the Schuylkill and came down by the Zoological Gardens on the other side.

Presently he came opposite that curious stone structure which forms the front of the bear pits.

Behind the iron gate which occupies the central arch a great, shaggy-coated fellow thrust his black muzzle against the bars and looked at Dick longingly, as though inquiring if he had not brought him something to eat.

Inside the pits were three great poles, upon two of which bears had climbed.

The one clinging to the central pole looked at Dick leeringly with such a comical expression that the boy could not help bursting out into a hearty laugh.

"Comical fellows, ain't they?" said a pleasant voice close behind him.

Dick turned on his heel abruptly.

Close beside him stood a stout, pleasant-faced gentleman, laughing at the bears like a boy.

"Why, I ought to know you, young man!" he exclaimed heartily, at the same time extending his hand toward Dick.

As for Dick, he was so surprised that he did not know what to say, for in the stout gentleman he instantly recognized Philadelphia's great philanthropist.

It was the Hon. George W. Childs!

CHAPTER IX.

DICK'S CHAT WITH MR. CHILDS, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

"You are Dick Rollins—Samuel Rollins' son—who called upon me for advice the other day."

"Yes, sir," replied Dick, simply.

For the life of him he could not think of a word to say.

"Why haven't you been into the office again? I was very busy that day. I hope you did not take offense at my leaving you so abruptly?"

"Oh, no sir."

"Because none was intended," continued Mr. Childs. "I feel very sorry for your father, and though it must be admitted that appearances are against him, I find it very hard to believe that he is guilty of the crime of which he stands charged."

"He is innocent, Mr. Childs—I can assure you he is innocent!" cried Dick, with flashing eyes, finding his tongue at last.

Now that his father's innocence was in question, there was no lack of words.

Indeed, they seemed to roll from Dick's mouth as easily as water from the back of the proverbial duck, and he entered into a most enthusiastic defence of his parent, to which the great philanthropist listened gravely until he was through.

"It may be as you say," he replied when Dick at last ceased to speak. "It may all be so, and I hope it is; but who, then, is this mysterious enemy who seems to bear so strong a resemblance to your father as to deceive even his nearest friends?"

"I'm sure I cannot tell you, sir."

"Have you no idea? Has your father none?"

"None at all, sir."

"Hum!" mused Mr. Childs. "Hum! It is very remarkable. Quite so, in point of fact. By the way, have you succeeded in getting anything to do yet?"

"I have not, sir."

"How, then, have you lived? I think you told me the other day that you had no friends to whom you could apply, and were entirely without means."

"It is true, sir. Still, I have not been altogether idle."

"What have you been doing?"

Dick blushed.

Not that there was anything to be ashamed of, but somehow he didn't like to tell Mr. Childs, who in more prosperous days had often been a guest at his father's table, that he had been selling newspapers in the street.

Had he known the man to whom he spoke more intimately, he would have been aware that for thus making the best of his desperate situation he would have respected him all the more.

As it was Dick told him about the marketman and the potato tallying, but refrained from mentioning other matters at all.

"Indeed," said Mr. Childs. "I have some acquaintance with this Mr. Douglass. A rough but honest and worthy man. Where are you staying, Dick Rollins?"

"With a friend, sir."

"Oh, then you have some friends. Can this one do nothing for you?"

Dick laughed.

"He is laid up in bed with a broken leg, sir, and as to money or influence he is as badly off as myself."

"Dear me. Matters are not very prosperous with you, I must say. Let me see—let me see. It won't do to give you money—"

"I wouldn't take any, sir," broke in Dick, hotly. "I'm not a beggar. All I ask is a chance to earn my bread."

"Of course, of course. Here, take this card, on which I have scrawled a few lines to Mr. Baker, of Baker & Plumber, the brokers. You know them, I presume?"

Dick was very red now, and his voice trembled, as he answered:

"I know of them, sir. It was they who sold out my father's property, pretending that they had orders to do so from him."

"Dear me, so it was. I remember now, Baker & Plumber were your father's brokers."

"They were, sir."

"So much the more reason that they should help you. They have made money out of their transactions with the father, and they owe at least a living to the son."

"They will not help me, Mr. Childs, I am very certain of it."

"And I," replied Mr. Childs, "am very certain that they will. Baker is under obligations to me. He is a rich and kindhearted old gentleman. Plumber, as you may know, is a younger man, and, I fear, inclined to be a little fast. You go down there, see Baker, and tell him I say he must put you to work."

And as he said it the great philanthropist shook hands with Dick, buttoned up his overcoat, and walked away.

"Shall you go?" asked Joe Rand eagerly, when Dick told him all about it that night.

"I don't know. Would you?"

"Would I? You can just bet I would. I tell you, Dick Rollins, it is the tallest kind of thing to have a friend like G. W. Childs. He's interested in you, and if this plan don't succeed, you may be sure he'll see that some other does."

Joe's argument settled it.

That night Dick worked at the potatoes again, but early the next morning he spruced himself up as well as his slender resources would permit, and with no little reluctance started for the office of Baker & Plumber to deliver the message of Mr. Childs.

Now, Dick personally knew neither of the partners in the great brokerage firm through which his father's business had been transacted for many years.

In fact, he knew so little about brokers and their ways, that he never stopped to reflect that it was altogether unlikely that he would find them at the office at so early an hour as eight o'clock. Dick walked briskly along Third street until he came to Walnut.

By frequent reference to the numbers on the buildings he had already become satisfied that the office of Baker & Plumber could not be far from the Merchants Exchange.

It proved to be next door to it, occupying the first floor on the right of the entrance to one of the great office buildings.

Dick was about to enter, when all at once a man, walking very fast, brushed past him and ran hastily up the steps.

Entering the building, he turned toward the door communicating with the offices of Baker & Plumber.

In doing this he raised his eyes and caught sight of Dick standing at the foot of the steps precisely at the same moment that Dick caught sight of him.

Instantly the man shot through the office door, slammed it behind him, and disappeared.

Not too quick, though, to prevent Dick Rollins from seeing at the top of the steps that mysterious face, the living counterpart of his father's, and in many respects strongly resembling his own.

CHAPTER X.

DICK FAILS TO FIND THE MYSTERIOUS UNKNOWN AND IS GREATLY PUZZLED THEREBY.

As the mysterious unknown slammed the door of Baker & Plumber's office behind him, Dick Rollins shot up the steps like the wind.

"I'll find out who that man is if I die for it," he said. "He shall tell me his name—why he follows me about, and——"

He had just reached the office door and was about to dash in, when all at once it struck him that he had no charge to bring against this man after all.

What had he donê?

Stared at Dick in the corridor of the Public Building, and again in Justice Haggerty's court room—nothing more.

Staring was no crime.

The fact that this man bore so strong a resemblance to Dick's father might mean nothing more than a singular coincidence.

Dick began to see the necessity of going a little slow.

"Perhaps he is either Baker or Plumber," he thought. "If that were so, it might give me something to work upon in my efforts to solve the mystery of my father's troubles. But there's no use in talking, I've got to tackle him, though I must be careful what I say."

He grasped the knob of the office door boldly and was about to enter.

Seeing the man pass in just ahead of him, Dick had made certain that the door was unfastened.

To his surprise he found it securely locked.

This discovery brought with it another moment of hesitation.

Then Dick rapped smartly on one of the ground glass panels of the door.

There was no answer.

Dick waited for a moment, then pressed his eye against the glass and tried to peer through it. Of course he could see nothing distinctly, but he did not fail to perceive a dark shadow moving about inside.

Presently the shadow vanished.

Dick waited a moment longer in a state of perplexity.

Then he knocked on the glass harder even than before.

"Here, here, what are you about? Get out wid yez! Don't be afther comin' into this building again."

The cry came from inside the office of Baker & Plumber, but from the head of the first flight of stairs.

Meanwhile there had been no answer returned to Dick's rap.

Dick raised his eyes as he drew back from the door and beheld a red-headed Irishman coming down the stairs with a mop in one hand and a pail of water in the other.

It was the janitor of the office building making his morning rounds.

As he approached Dick he shook the mop threateningly, spattering him all over with dirty water, and again ordered him off in the roughest kind of style.

"Look here," said Dick, "you needn't be so grumpy. I'm not going to steal anything. I want to see Baker & Plumber on business. This is a public building, and I've just as much right here as you have. Don't you throw water on me again."

"What for won't I?" answered the man—but he held himself at a respectable distance nevertheless, for Dick was a stoutly built young fellow as anyone could see. "I'm the janitor of this building, an' we allow no beggars nor peddlers. Get along wid ye, now, and don't be after makin' a fuss."

"It's you that is making all the fuss," answered Dick, trying to control his temper. "I tell you again I want to see Baker & Plumber on business. I'm neither a beggar nor a peddler, and you've no right to order me out."

"Baker & Plumber ain't in. Do you expect to find them here at daylight? Come again at nine o'clock."

"I know better. One of them is in. I saw him go in just a minute ago."

"Don't be after givin' me sass, young feller. Be off wid yez now, afore I call a cop."

There was nothing for Dick but to retreat, unless he wanted to get into a row.

This he saw plainly enough, and he reluctantly turned his

back on the janitor and descended the steps to the street below.

"I won't lose sight of the door till that man comes out or I can go in," he muttered. "Not if I have to stay here watching it until night."

Dick posed himself at the foot of the steps and waited. Once or twice the janitor appeared at the door and stared at him, but he did not say anything, nor did he attempt to drive him away. Half an hour passed.

Not for an instant had Dick lost sight of the office door, but the man whom he had seen enter did not make his appearance.

Presently a boy came along with his hands in his pockets, whistling a popular air.

He ran up the steps and tried Baker & Plumber's door.

Evidently it was still locked, for the boy did not succeed in opening it, but turned away, and began dancing upon the hall floor.

At first Dick thought he would speak to the boy and ask him if he belonged there.

Upon reflection, however, he determined not to do this, but to simply wait.

Another half hour passed, but the door did not open. The boy still remained waiting in the hall.

Just after nine o'clock a pleasant-faced old gentleman passed Dick and ascended the steps with slow and dignified tread.

Upon reaching the door of Baker & Plumber's office he first tried it, and upon finding it locked, drew a key from his pocket, fitted it to the lock and passed in.

"This must be Mr. Baker," thought Dick.

The boy had entered just behind the old gentleman, who bade him a pleasant good-morning.

Dick waited for a moment or two, and then went in himself with Mr. Childs' card of introduction in his hand. As he closed the door he cast a hasty glance about him. The office was a double one and handsomely furnished.

In the outer room, which was the largest, the boy was bustling about putting things in order, while through an open door Dick could see the old gentleman seated at a desk examining his morning mail.

No sign of the man Dick had first seen enter could be discovered.

"Probably he is in the rear office," thought Dick, as he stepped boldly up to the railing and inquired for Mr. Baker.

"Mr. Baker! Step into the private office," answered the boy respectfully. "He has just come in and will see you I guess."

He opened a gate as he spoke, and Dick walked in.

He felt certain that he should find the mysterious unknown in the private office with Mr. Baker, and his heart beat violently.

He was mistaken.

Upon entering the office there was no one there but Mr. Baker seated calmly at his desk opening his mail.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK GETS A JOB.

"Well, young man, what can I do for you?"

"I—I wanted to see you sir—I—this is, I come from Mr. Childs."

Blushing and stammering, Dick presented the card given him by the great philanthropist in Fairmount Park.

"Take a seat," said Mr. Baker, waving his hand toward a chair. "Let me see, what is this my friend Childs says?"

"Dear Baker,—Please make a place for this young man in your office, and—um—um—um—oblige yours, G. W. Childs." Well, sir, it seems my friend wants me to give you employment. That's the idea, is it not?"

"Yes, sir," replied Dick, his diffidence with firm hold upon him again.

"What's your name?" asked Mr. Baker, tossing the card on his desk, picking up another letter, and beginning to open it.

"Dick Rollins, sir."

Mr. Baker dropped the paper-cutter and stared.

"Dick Rollins! Are you Samuel Rollins' son?"

"I am, sir."

"And you have the face to come to me for employment. Upon my word I admire your nerve."

"I told Mr. Childs it would be no use to ask you," replied Dick, flushing. "After what you did to my father, I had no right to expect——"

"Softly, softly," interrupted Mr. Baker, wheeling about in his chair. "It strikes me, young man, that you are getting the cart before the horse. It should be after what your father did to me—to my firm."

"I can't discuss it," said Dick, rising. He was very pale now and his voice trembled, but as was always the case when his father's honor was called into question, he had regained the use of his tongue.

"I was a fool to come here," he said, hotly. "My father has suffered enough from——"

"Sit down again, young man," interposed Mr. Baker, quietly. "Do not let your temper get the best of you—it is a bad habit in business matters. You were not a fool to come here with such a recommendation as you bring with you. I would do anything for Mr. Childs. Now then tell me plainly what you want?"

"I want a chance to earn an honest living."

"To that everyone is entitled. Perhaps I can help you. Let us see. How old are you, Dick Rollins?"

Dick told him.

"You were attending Haverford College when your father got into trouble, if I remember aright?"

"I was."

"You ought to be reasonably well educated."

"I think I am up to the average, Mr. Baker."

"Hum—yes. What have you been doing since—that is, of late—that's it. What have you been doing of late?"

"Various things. Anything and everything I could find to do."

"You have had no experience in regular business?"

"No, sir."

"Well," said Mr. Baker, slowly, "well, I have made money out of your father, Dick Rollins, and I can't say that I ever lost any. His curious conduct has placed me in a very awkward position, but—but—well, I'm willing to help his son."

By this time Dick had grown calmer and in a great measure regained his self-confidence.

While Mr. Baker had been questioning him, he had been thinking.

It was in the hands of this firm that his father's property and the property which he held in trust for others had been placed.

It was this firm who had sold him out during his absence, claiming and proving to the satisfaction of judge and jury that they had done so upon the personal order of Samuel Rollins himself.

Here was the mystery, the key to which, if he could but

find it, would enable Dick to prove his father's innocence before the world.

Then Dick remembered the mysterious unknown and the strange occurrence of the morning.

"I'm going to catch on here if the thing is possible," he thought to himself. "What better beginning in the great work which lies before me than to get in with this firm."

He felt the ambitious thrill of a young detective arise within him as he controlled his feelings, and said in answer to Mr. Baker's last remark:

"If you will help me, I shall be very grateful, sir, and will try to do the best I can."

"Well, I'm willing to try you, if Plumber makes no objection," answered Mr. Baker. "You look like an honest lad, and talk like a smart one. I am not one of those who believe in visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, and all that sort of rubbish. The fact is our clerk left us yesterday in a hurry—we caught him stealing—do you think you can fill his place?"

"What are the duties?" inquired Dick.

Mr. Baker explained. There was nothing particularly complicated about the work, and Dick said confidently that he thought he could do it.

"All right," said Mr. Baker, very pleasantly. "I am willing to help you, Dick Rollins—more than willing. But I have a partner—Mr. Plumber—I cannot answer for him. At times he is peculiar. Remain here until he comes in and we will put the question to him. Meanwhile, let me put a question or two to you. Do not get angry. This business of your father's—how do you account for it? I have tried hard to believe in his honesty. Is it not true that he is insane?"

"No, it is not, Mr. Baker," answered Dick, decidedly. "My father is neither dishonest nor crazy. He has enemies working against him—someone has personated him, and——"

Dick had it on the end of his tongue to speak of the man he had seen enter the office but he did not. He was wondering if that man could be Mr. Plumber.

The question was immediately settled, for before Mr. Baker had time to say another word, Mr. Plumber came bustling in.

Certainly this was not the man Dick had seen fly past him up the steps.

In size and general appearance he might have answered his description, but his face bore no more resemblance to that of Dick's father than did the face of Mr. Baker himself.

He eyed Dick curiously, simply bowing when Mr. Baker introduced him, and listened without speaking while his partner put the case.

"Very good, Baker. I'm willing if you are," he said briefly, when Mr. Baker ceased to speak. "Dick Rollins, you may come here to-morrow morning. If you suit us to commence with we will give you ten dollars a week."

Was it fate which had sent Dick Rollins to the office of Baker & Plumber—which had brought about his meeting with Mr. Childs in the park?

Let the sequel show.

At last, after many trials, Dick had found a job.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MR. BAKER'S BONDS.

"Dick, I want to speak to you a moment."

"Yes, sir."

Dick Rollins laid down his pen and passed into Mr. Baker's

private office, where that gentleman sat, his elbow resting upon the desk, his head upon his hand.

"Dick," he said, "I am feeling very unwell. Really, I don't think I can stand it any longer. I must hurry home, my boy, and send for the doctor. Put these bonds in the safe, and when you go be sure that it is securely locked. There is \$50,000 altogether. If Plumber don't show up in the morning, take them down to Barns & Beagle and tell them to sell them out on my account."

Dick took up the bonds and counted them carefully.

"I will do just as you say, sir," he answered. "I hope you are not going to be seriously sick."

"I don't think so," replied Mr. Baker. "Probably I shall be better in the morning. Tell Tom to call a carriage and I will go at once."

Dick put the bonds in the safe, and, as it was already past four o'clock, he put the books in too, and locked it securely, then helping Mr. Baker into the carriage which presently drove up to the door.

A year had passed since the day Dick Rollins engaged with Baker & Plumber.

From the position of clerk at ten dollars a week, he had been advanced to that of bookkeeper and cashier, and was now in receipt of a salary, which though it might have seemed small in the eyes of some, enabled him to live very comfortably indeed.

During the year many things had happened as a matter of course.

First and foremost Dick had completely won the confidence of Mr. Baker, and had himself grown to esteem that gentleman as a friend.

Whatever the truth concerning his father's troubles might be, Dick had long since become satisfied that Mr. Baker was perfectly honest in all he claimed.

As for Mr. Plumber, Dick did not know what to make of him.

He rarely spoke to Dick, and never interfered with him. When Mr. Baker, pleased with the boy's diligent attention to business, had spoken of advancing Dick, Mr. Plumber readily assented.

"He's smart and he's honest as far as I can see," was what Dick heard him say in reply.

And yet somehow Dick felt that Mr. Plumber did not like him—felt that he was forever secretly watching him. Though he invariably professed the utmost friendliness, Dick could not help feeling that the man was not his friend after all.

As for the mysterious unknown, Dick had seen nothing of him since the moment of his disappearance behind the office door.

To add to the mystery he had learned that no one at the time had been in possession of keys to the office except Mr. Plumber, the janitor, and Mr. Baker himself. As to the method by which the man had managed to leave the office, that was another mystery.

Opening from the private room was a door leading out into an alley, it was true; but to this door—which was seldom used and never kept unlocked—there were but two keys, one carried by each member of the firm.

Altogether the matter was very mysterious, and many was the time that Dick and Joe had talked it over in their room up under the roof of the great office building in which the affair occurred.

How was this?

Did Joe Rand then live in the building?

Indeed he did. He had been living there for the past six months.

The fact was that through Dick's influence with Mr. Baker,

whose brother owned the building, Joe, who was by this time completely restored to health, had succeeded the red-headed janitor, and Dick shared his comfortable apartments away up at the top of the house. It was bachelor's hall with a vengeance.

They did their own housekeeping and Joe had become a famous cook. They were as thoroughly independent as two young fellows could possibly wish to be—had all they needed and plenty to spare.

Very different then were things from the days of the garret in the alley—very different indeed.

Now, before proceeding with our story, we must stop to mention that there was one very peculiar thing about Mr. Plumber.

He was in the habit of indulging in mysterious absences.

He would walk out of the office ostensibly to go on 'Change, to his lunch, or with the avowed intention of going straight to his house, and would not be seen by anyone for days—sometimes it was weeks.

Where he went no one knew, nor would he ever speak about the subject, but always grew angry if the slightest allusion to the matter was made.

Confidentially Mr. Baker communicated his belief to Dick that Mr. Plumber drank; but as to Dick himself he could truthfully say that during the whole year of his service with the great brokerage firm he had never seen the junior partner under the influence of liquor once.

As soon as Mr. Baker had gone, Dick hurried back to the office, cleared up such business as remained unfinished, dismissed the boy and closed for the night.

Before leaving, however, he opened the safe again as a matter of precaution, to make certain that Mr. Baker's bonds were safe in the drawer in which he had placed them.

"I don't like the responsibility of those bonds for a cent," he said to Joe, when he found himself in their room upstairs a few moments later. "I wish Mr. Baker had taken them home with him, but seeing that he didn't I wish to goodness Mr. Plumber would come back and attend to their sale himself."

"It shows that old man Baker has got confidence in you, Dick," answered Joe, who was "fussing" over the stove busily engaged in preparing supper at the time. "If he only knew you as well as I do, he'd be willing to trust you with all the money he's worth, and they do say that's no slough of a pile."

That evening the boys went to the Arch street theatre to witness the famous Christmas spectacle of "Old Dame Trot and Her Comical Cat."

The entertainment was a good one and kept up till after eleven.

After it was over Joe and Dick stopped in at Jimmy Spencer's on Chestnut street and had oyster stews, after which Joe lighted a cigar—Dick had not learned to smoke as yet—and just as the midnight hour rang out from a neighboring steeple, the boys turned the corner of Third and Walnut streets, passed the Merchants' Exchange and were home.

"Say, Joe, do you know I believe I'll go into the office and take another look at Mr. Baker's bonds before we turn in," said Dick, as his companion closed and locked the great outer door of the building behind them.

"Pshaw! What's the use, Dick. We locked the door when we went out. We found it locked just now. Of course no one can have been in the building since we left."

"I should feel safer to do it, Joe. Mr. Plumber is off on one of his mysterious absences, you know; for a week no one has seen him, and now that Mr. Baker is sick, the whole responsibility rests on my shoulders. It won't take a moment. There, the door is unlocked now, and— Great Scott! The

safe is open! Someone— Joe! Joe! I am ruined! The bonds are gone!"

Dick had lighted the gas while speaking, when to his horror he discovered that the doors of the great safe were wide open.

Now he stood before it as pale as death, gazing down into the empty drawer in which he had placed Mr. Baker's bonds.

"What! How! Gone! The bonds gone!" exclaimed Joe Rand in horrified amazement. "I say, Dick Rollins, have them oysters gone to your head?"

"Nonsense! Do you think I'm fooling? There—look—see for yourself that I am not."

Dick seized Joe by the arm, dragged him before the open safe and there, sure enough, was a drawer pulled out to its utmost extent and empty.

"Is that the drawer the bonds was in?" asked Joe, aghast.

"Of course it is. Great Scott, Joe! I am ruined. What will Mr. Baker say? What am I to say to make him believe I am telling him the truth."

"To make him believe you, Dick? Why, how could anyone what knows you disbelieve you? I honestly believe you never told a deliberate lie in your life."

"But everyone has not the same confidence in me that you have, Joe. I—that is someone—oh, Joe! Joe! I am ruined! I am ruined, and just as I began to think I was making a start."

And Dick leaned against the heavy iron door of the safe and buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, come now, I say!" cried Joe, in his rough way. "This won't do, Dick. This won't do at all. There's no use in giving up. We'd better, a blame sight, try an' find out who the thief was, an' which way he went."

"It's no use," said Dick, hoarsely. "Don't you see, Joe, the safe has been opened in the regular way by someone who understands the combination. This thing is a putup job to get me into trouble. My unknown enemy has been at work here again."

"Then so much the more reason why we should have our wits about us. Dick, if we don't hunt that scoundrel down this time why—why blame me!"

It was the strongest expression Joe ever used.

"What can we do?" whispered Dick, trembling violently. "We must do something, but what? \$50,000! How can I ever face Mr. Baker and tell him of his loss?"

"Well, you haven't got to do that to-night."

"I ought to do it at once. He left these bonds especially in my charge and—"

"There, there!" answered Joe, who had lighted every gas jet in the office. "No more shilly-shalling now, something's going to be done, Dick Rollins, you can bet your life on that. Didn't you think when you first engaged here that there was something crooked about these people? Now you just tel me all about it. Who beside yourself knows the combination of that lock?"

"No one but Mr. Baker and Mr. Plumber."

"Then one of them has been here and opened it and taken the bonds—that's clear enough, Dick."

"Impossible, Joe. Mr. Baker went home sick, and it ain't likely he came back and got the bonds, leaving the safe open behind him. As for Mr. Plumber he hasn't been seen in a week."

"I don't trust neither on 'em, Dick. Didn't they sell out your father?"

"They certainly did, Joe, but now that I have come to know them better I am certain that they were deceived into it."

"Don't be too sure of that. Have you forgotten that you saw the feller what looks like your father go through that door a year ago? How did Baker and Plumber account for that?"

They could not account for it, Joe. I have spoken to them about it, and—"

"And both are humbugging you, Dick Rollins. That's my belief. Anyhow you've got me for a witness. We've been together ever since the shop closed."

"Yes, but you didn't see me close the safe, Joe. Depend upon it nobody will believe what we say."

"But you did lock the safe?"

"Of course I did."

"And we know the office door was locked, and as for the outer door of the building, I locked that myself. How the mischief anyone could manage to get in beats me for— By gracious, Dick Rollins! We've clean forgot the alley door!"

"The alley door!" cried Dick, turning pale. "Why, Joe, that door has not been open in months."

"I'll bet you a shilling it's open now," answered Joe, as they sprang toward the private office. And sure enough so it was.

The door was not only unlocked but stood wide open.

It was plain enough now by what means the thief had come and gone.

"Have you a key to this door, Dick?" whispered Joe. "Mine are all upstairs."

"I have one, yes. And so much the worse for me, for they will swear I used it."

"Use it now, then," answered Joe, who had hurried back into the main office and turned out the gas.

He pushed Dick through the alley door, and taking the key from him, locked it behind him.

"What are you going to do?" asked Dick.

"Going to the station, of course, to report this business to the police. It's what we ought to do—what we must do. We've got nothing to conceal, and—thunder! Dick Rollins, look down there at the end of the alley, and tell me what you see!"

The boys were standing together at the top of the step leading up to the side entrance to Baker & Plumber's office.

Down at the end of the alley a solitary street lamp burned, and beside it stood a stout, portly old gentleman with his face turned toward them.

"Great Heaven! It is Mr. Baker!" gasped Dick, and before Joe could say another word he had leaped down the steps and was dashing down the alley at the top of his speed.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MIDNIGHT WANDERER.

Did Mr. Baker see Dick Rollins coming?

Was this the reason why he made a sudden dive for a car on Walnut street as it jingled past?

Whether it was the reason or not he was gone before Dick could gain the lamp post, by the side of which he had stood.

"Was it Baker—did you see his face?" panted Joe, as he came dashing up

"Hey! Stop the car! Hey, hey!" roared Dick, dashing away from Joe up Walnut street without even stopping to reply.

But as luck would have it the conductor was inside the car collecting fares, the driver did not hear Dick's shouts or was disinclined to stop.

Up the street sped Dick, shouting himself hoarse, with Joe running after him.

It was no use.

He could not catch the car, and at last, when his breath gave out, he had to stop.

"Was it Baker?" repeated Joe, as he overtook him.

"Of course it was! Joe Rand, what can this mean?"

"Blamed if I know, Dick. I thought it was Baker, when I first seen him standing there by the lamp post at the end of the alley."

"And I am sure of it," panted Dick. "Joe, this is a plot to ruin me. I'm going to take the very next car up to Mr. Baker's house."

"Go slow, old man, go slow," said Joe. "Don't forget that you thought you saw your father go into the office, when you knew blame well at the time that he was in the stone jug."

It was cold that night. It had been cold and raw all day, and now it was beginning to snow.

Filled with perplexity Dick Rollins, accompanied by Joe, boarded the next car that came along, alighting in front of the elegant mansion of Mr. Baker, on West Walnut street, opposite Rittenhouse square, a little later on.

"I say, Dick, there's something wrong here," whispered Joe. "No one has been into Baker's house during the last half hour—that's flat."

"Look at them steps—they're thick with snow."

"And not a footprint to be seen—Joe, by gracious, you're right."

It was plain enough that Mr. Baker had not entered the house since the snow began to fall unless, indeed, he had flown in by the window.

The storm, which was every moment increasing in violence, had already covered the marble steps of the Baker mansion with a coating of pure white flakes lying in one unbroken sheet.

The house also was entirely dark, and from all outward appearance there was every reason to believe that its inmates had long ago retired to their beds.

"Are you going to tackle it?" whispered Joe.

Dick stood irresolute.

He had been certain that it was Mr. Baker who had boarded the car ahead of him.

All the way up Walnut street he had been telling himself that the man he had grown to esteem so highly had played a trick on him—that he would ring the bell boldly, accuse him to his face, and—now that he had reached the house at last he felt all his courage fail.

"Upon my word, Joe, I don't know what to do."

"Nor I, either. It's my opinion we're sold."

"But it was Baker."

"It couldn't have been. What in the name of sense would have brought him out of a sick bed on a night like this, let alone stealing his own bonds?"

"Let us wait a few minutes," whispered Dick. "Perhaps he has delayed entering only to throw us off the scent. He may come yet. Come across the street and we'll watch from behind one of the trees in front of the square."

Pushing their way across the street through the snow the boys took up their position behind one of the great shadowing elms and waited.

At the end of half an hour they were still waiting and watching, not one whit wiser than they had been before.

The house still remained dark, the covering of the snow upon the steps unbroken—Mr. Baker had not been seen.

"We've been fooled, that's certain," said Joe at last. "Look here, Dick. We may as well give it up."

"Give it up! Joe Rand, you forget what is involved."

"No, I don't forget either. But what are you going to do? If you ring the bell and find Baker asleep you'll be in a sweet position. Fancy what he'll say when you tell him about the bonds."

"But I've got to tell him some time."

"Better wait till morning. Come on. Let's go over to

Chestnut street and take the down car—thunder! What ails that woman—is she drunk?"

Along the opposite side of the street a slight figure enveloped from head to foot in a long black cloak had been rapidly advancing toward him.

It was a woman, and as she came opposite Mr. Baker's house she shot one glance toward it, seemed to reel, staggered forward a few steps and sank down upon the snow.

"Drunk or sober, it's a woman," cried Dick. "Joe, we must help her," and he hurried across the street.

There was a dimly burning gas lamp close beside the spot where the woman had fallen.

When Dick Rollins raised her with tender hand he had expected to see the bloated features of one of the unhappy midnight wanderers, of which Philadelphia, in common with every large city, has her share.

"Come, get up. You musn't lie here," he said, kindly.

Then, as the light fell upon her face, a cry of amazement escaped him.

Whoever the midnight wanderer might be, whatever her name or station, all that Dick thought of at that instant was that he was looking down upon one of the most beautiful faces it had ever been his fortune to behold!

CHAPTER XV.

MATTERS GET ALL TANGLED UP.

"Phew! Holy Cæsar, what a pretty girl!" blurted out honest Joe Rand, as his eyes caught the beauteous vision which had so strongly affected Dick.

"Hush!" whispered Dick. "She may hear you, she——"

"Has she fainted?"

"I think so."

"More likely she's full."

"Joe! How can you! Look at that face. She drink?"

What was it that went thumping away inside Dick Rollins' overcoat—that made him forget for the time being even Mr. Baker's bonds?

Probably it was his heart, since it could not have been anything else, but certain it was it was beating in a way that it had never beat before.

Kneeling beside the girl, who, from all appearance, could not have been older than her sixteenth year, Dick began chafing the prettiest and most delicate hands he had ever touched, supporting her head on his knee.

With her fall the cloak had dropped back, revealing a mass of curling, golden hair. It was almost too much for Dick, and it sent through his frame a thrill such as he had never experienced, when all at once the eyes opened and stared straight into his face.

There was a start—a frightened cry.

Springing to her feet the girl gathered her cloak about her, and would have glided away had not Dick stopped her with a gentle pressure of the hand.

"You are feeling better?" he asked, simply.

The girl seemed to hesitate, and then turned and faced him.

As her eyes met Dick's again she blushed and seemed to read his thoughts.

As for Joe he was so overcome that he had pulled off his hat and stood bareheaded in the snow.

"I am much better, sir," said the girl, slowly, "and I hardly know how to thank you, I—I am not well—I must have fainted."

"You are in trouble?" said Dick, reading the anxious expression on her face.

Again there was hesitation, but only for an instant.

"Oh, gentlemen, if I could only feel certain that I could trust you! I am in great trouble—I——"

"Indeed, and you may trust us, miss," said Dick, gently.

"I know what trouble is—we both know. This is Joe Rand. My name is Dick Rollins. If there is anything we can do——"

The girl flashed one quick inquiring look at Dick out of her great melting eyes.

"Would you be willing to act as my escort to the gate of the Eastern Penitentiary?" she interrupted. "I know what a singular request it is, but I must go, and I am laboring under such excitement that I fear I can never reach it alone and in the storm."

"The Eastern Penitentiary!" gasped Dick. "The Eastern Penitentiary!"

"Gentlemen, I do not ask you to go with me. Show me what cars I ought to take and——"

"But what in the name of sense do you want at the Eastern Penitentiary at this unearthly hour?" questioned Joe, his suspicions beginning to be aroused.

"I cannot tell you."

"What's your name? Where do you live?"

"Do not ask me," answered the girl, beginning to cry. "I must go, and I am afraid to go alone. Oh, have pity on me, and tell me what cars to take as quick as you can."

"If you must go I will go with you," said Dick, decidedly.

"Joe, you will come, too."

"Oh, I will be so grateful," breathed the girl, "so very grateful! We must hurry—we must be there by two o'clock, or it will be too late."

"Too late for what?" demanded Joe.

"Do not ask me. I cannot answer. Only take me there and leave me at the gate. I ask no more."

"Say, Dick, she's crazy!" whispered Joe, drawing Dick a little to one side. "She's as crazy as a loon, if she is as pretty as a picture. If you go gallivantin' about with her losing time that may be precious, in my opinion, you're a fool."

"Crazy. Nonsense! Joe, she's in trouble, and we must help her."

"So are you in trouble. Think of Baker and the bonds."

"Well, we can't do any more about it until morning, can we? You said so yourself just a little while ago."

"Perhaps I did. But I didn't say that you ought to go off the dear knows where with the first strange girl you happened to meet."

"But Joe——"

"Don't talk to me, Dick Rollins. You are going to make a fool of yourself, and you want me to help you."

"Joe! Don't you understand, or won't you understand? That girl is in trouble. Perhaps her father may be in the Eastern Penitentiary."

"Oh, come now, that's altogether too romantic. But if you are set on going, Dick, why all there is about it, I'm going with you. I've no notion of seeing you go alone. Who

knows? You have enemies. This may be nothing but a trap."

"A trap—with that face? Joe Rand, I'm amazed at you."

And thus indignantly exclaiming, Dick moved to the side of the girl again.

"We will go with you, miss," he said, simply.

And they went.

The mere fact that he was walking by the side of the fair stranger seemed to so fill his thoughts, that Joe came to the conclusion that he had fallen head over heels in love with the golden head and big blue eyes, and indeed, it is our opinion that Joe was not very far astray.

The further on their way they got the more anxious Joe became, for he expected every minute that the girl would betray them into the hands of some ruffian in true novel style.

Yet she did not.

In fact she did nothing but submit herself quietly to the guidance of Dick and Joe.

All the long ride she scarcely spoke at all, and her desire to be left to her own thoughts was so manifest that at last all three fell into silence, which was only broken when Dick stopped the car and they alighted, finding themselves standing alone at the corner of Fairmount and Corinthian avenues as the car rolled on.

"We are here, miss," said Dick, pointing toward the front of the gloomy building. "Is there nothing further that we can do for you?"

"Oh, dear me! Oh, dear me! what shall I do?" wailed the girl, bursting into a flood of tears. "I thought I had the courage to tell them, but I haven't. If you would go to the gate and ring the bell——"

"Hist! Hist!" whispered Joe, suddenly. "There's something going on up there on the wall on the Corinthian avenue side."

Before the words had fairly left Joe's mouth the girl, turning her gaze in the direction indicated, threw up her hands, gave one piercing shriek, and dashed up Corinthian avenue like mad.

Dick would have followed had not Joe caught his arm and roughly stayed him.

"Do you want to get us both into trouble?" he breathed. "There's someone trying to escape from the penitentiary. Don't you see—there—walking on the wall."

Corinthian avenue, which skirts the wall of the Eastern Penitentiary on the right hand side was well lighted.

Even as Dick looked he heard a shot fired, heard shouts and then a cry.

Then to his amazement he distinctly saw fat, portly Mr. Baker running nimbly along the top of the penitentiary wall.

CHAPTER XVI.

DICK TO THE RESCUE OF HIS FAIR DULCINEA.

"Let him out! Let him out! He is innocent! I stole the money. Lock me up and let him out."

Amid the howling wind and driving snowflakes the cry went forth upon the stillness of the night.

It came from the Corinthian avenue side of the Eastern Penitentiary, where Dick Rollins and Joe Rand could distinctly see fat Mr. Baker running nimbly along the top of the wall, shouting like mad.

He was dressed precisely as Dick and Joe had seen him in the alley.

In one hand he held what appeared to be a bundle of papers, which he was shaking violently at someone in the penitentiary yard as he ran.

"Oh, I've got the ducats to pay for it!" he shouted. "Let him out, will you? Let him out! Let him out!"

Bang! bang! bang!

There were three sharp reports as from a rifle.

Loud cries were heard—lights flashed—there was a great deal of noise around on Fairmount avenue, as though several persons were advancing from that side.

"Joe! Joe! For Heaven's sake, what does this mean?" breathed Dick, clutching his companion by the arm.

"It means that old man Baker's run mad as a hatter!," replied Joe. "Quick, Dick! Let's get out of this, or we won't have a chance! Let's cut down Corinthian avenue—there's a whole mob of fellers coming t'other way."

"But the girl, Joe—the girl?"

"Oh, confound the girl. It is she that got us into the scrape. First thing you know you'll get a bullet in your back if we stay much longer fooling here."

But Dick had no notion of abandoning to her fate the girl whose beauty had already made so strong an impression upon his heart.

Still he made no objection to Joe's proposal.

Upon leaving them so abruptly the girl had run down Corinthian avenue.

To follow Joe's advice was likewise to follow her, and away the boys dashed through the snow.

Meanwhile Mr. Baker continued to run along the wall in the same direction with themselves.

Evidently the shots had alarmed him, although they had been without other effect, for he had now ceased to shout and seemed looking out for some good place to jump.

Now, for the first time, the boys perceived a carriage standing at the curb, well down toward the end of the wall.

It was an old-fashioned hack with a trunk race behind, drawn by two horses, which stood unblanketed in the storm.

"There he goes! There he goes!" whispered Joe at the same instant. "Great Cæsar! the man will surely break his neck!"

Even as he spoke Mr. Baker gave a flying leap from the wall, landing on his back in the snow.

He was up again in an instant.

The place he had chosen for his leap was close alongside of the carriage, and upon regaining his feet the boys saw him run toward it and climb hastily upon the box.

Was it imagination?

Dick was almost inclined to think so, for down close to the ground he could see nothing distinctly, but most certainly

it seemed to him that the girl in the black cloak glided from the shadow of the wall, sprang into the carriage and pulled the door shut.

"Joe! She must not go with him! He is mad and might do her harm. By heavens! I must save her, and I will!"

"Dick! Dick! Stop! Don't you do it! Stop! Stop, I say!"

It was no use.

Dick had torn himself from his companion and was dashing toward the carriage with the speed of the wind.

"Halt, there! Halt, or we fire!" came the shouts from behind.

It was no time to parley.

Almost in the same breath shots whistled past Joe Rand, who lost no time in skurrying after Dick.

He had not advanced a dozen steps when he slipped and fell headlong, landing plump on his face in the snow.

Meanwhile Dick, though he had not lost an instant, found himself too late to prevent Mr. Baker from making off with the hack.

It had been his intention to seize the horses by the heads and, if possible, hold them until the prison guards came up.

That Mr. Baker had lost his reason Dick had not a shadow of doubt; and as he ran he found himself wondering if the affairs of his unfortunate father had not been at the bottom of it all.

"Who was it that he was calling upon the prison authorities to release, if not Samuel Rollins?"

It certainly looked as though a troubled conscience had driven him mad.

Then there was the girl.

Was she Mr. Baker's daughter?

Dick, knowing as he did absolutely nothing of his employer's family, found himself on this point equally at sea.

Quick as had been his action, Dick was quite too slow for Mr. Baker.

He had gathered up the reins even before the boy had reached the carriage, and seizing the whip gave the horses several powerful cuts.

"Stop!" shouted Dick. "Stop, Mr. Baker! It is I! Dick Rollins! I want to speak to you! Stop, I say!"

Then it seemed to Dick that the man on the box turned and made faces at him, as he lashed the horses into a still harder run.

In another instant it would have been beyond Dick's power to have done what he did just then.

With a bound forward and a flying leap he caught the rack behind the carriage, and clutching the strap with both hands, his stomach pressed hard against the rack, he hung there as the carriage rolled onward through the snow, his legs dangling down behind.

It was a ticklish position.

The carriage rolled and swayed from side to side like a ship in a storm.

Again and again Dick tried to draw himself upon the rack but without success.

He had no purchase—the carriage swayed so that he could not—but there! It was done at last.

Dick sank down upon the rack almost breathless, when suddenly:

"Crack, crack, crack!" came the whip-lash, taking him across the face and his already tingling ears.

He bore it bravely and never made a sound.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he could hear someone shriek above him. "There's no one there. I've got the best of them all. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"If it wasn't for that girl I declare I wouldn't stay here another minute," thought Dick, his blood fairly curdling at the sound of that demoniacal laugh. "Did she really get into the carriage, I wonder, or did I only imagine it? I could almost swear I saw her enter, and yet——"

And yet he had no means of determining, for strangely enough the usual window in the back of hacks of so ancient pattern was wanting in this one.

To stretch one's neck around the wheel and peer in at the side window was a decidedly dangerous undertaking, nevertheless Dick tried it.

He could see the front seat, which was vacant.

All attempts to catch a glimpse of the back seat proved fruitless, and with the boy still clinging to the rack the carriage rolled on.

"Here! Here! Stop there!" shouted the policeman at the corner of Corinthian and Girard avenues, dashing out and trying to catch the flying horses by the head.

The man on the box only cracked his whip and laughed loud and wildly.

The last Dick saw of the policeman as he was whisked away, he was shaking his fist at the flying vehicle while picking himself up out of the snow.

"I wonder where this is going to end?" thought Dick.

It was hard to say.

Down Girard avenue rolled the hack, square after square, until at last they crossed Shackamaxon street and were in Fishtown away over in Kensington, and on and still on into the neighborhood of the great coal docks of the Reading road.

By and by the horses began to go slower and slower, and at last, in front of a row of shabby frame dwellings on Richmond street, they stopped.

Dick dropped to the ground in an instant and ran around the hack.

To his utter amazement he saw that the box was empty and the reins trailing on the ground.

There was not a trace of Mr. Baker to be seen.

CHAPTER XVII.

JOE FINDS THE BONDS.

Now we must return to Joe Rand whom we left, it will be remembered, sprawling in the snow alongside the penitentiary wall.

He wasn't hurt a bit, and, of course, his first thought was to regain his feet.

It was this which caused him to thrust out his hands, when all at once the right came in contact with what Joe took to be a bundle of paper lying in the snow.

Now, Joe Rand was decidedly a quick-witted fellow.

To make use of his own expressive phraseology, there were "no flies on him," and it popped into his head all in an instant that these were the papers shaken by Mr. Baker when he was screaming out about his money while dancing on the wall.

No sooner had the idea popped into Joe's head than Joe popped on to his feet.

The next thing the guards knew—and they thought that they had their eyes upon him—he had popped altogether out of sight, having first taken the precaution to pop the package of papers into the pocket of his coat.

Now just exactly how Joe managed it we are uninformed.

The fact is, it was all done so quickly that he hardly knew himself how he did it.

Certain it was, however, that the prison guard gave chase to the flying hack, Joe Rand managed to slip across the street and get into the shadow, when the next thing he knew, he found himself crouching in a vacant lot up against a fence.

Here he remained for fully fifteen minutes.

Already he had seen them return, take the ladder from against the penitentiary wall and disappear around the corner of Fairmount avenue before he dared to move.

"Thank goodness, they haven't caught Dick," he muttered, while stealing along the fence toward the end of the lot. "I hope no harm comes to him, but—Holy Jemina! If these here papers ain't government bonds!"

It almost took Joe's breath away.

He had paused under a street lamp for a single instant to have a look at the papers.

The package was a large one, and the papers were crisp and all of the same size.

Even Joe, inexperienced as he was in such matters, saw at a glance that he held a small fortune in his hands.

Without stopping to investigate any further, he thrust the bonds back into the pocket of his overcoat and ran toward the Brown street end of the square.

He had no doubt whatever that he held in his possession the bonds stolen from the safe in the office of Baker & Plumber, nor had he greater doubt that Mr. Baker was himself the thief.

But what was he to do?

It was all this that puzzled honest Joe.

He looked this way and that, hoping against hope that he might see something of Dick.

Then after a time, "seeing," as he expressed it, "nuthin' of nobody," Joe skirted around the other side of the penitentiary, and took the Fairmount cars down town in a much mixed frame of mind.

He went straight to the office building and let himself into the office of Baker & Plumber.

Everything was precisely as they had left it.

The doors of the great safe were still open, and so was the drawer.

"If I were only sure that these were old Baker's bonds, I'd put them in the drawer and lock her up," muttered Joe;

but seein' as I ain't, I'll just skip upstairs, for maybe Dick has got in."

But Dick had not got in.

Everything in the rooms up under the roof of the building remained precisely as the boys had left it when they went out to the theatre hours before.

Dick wasn't there, nor had he been there.

Joe lit the gas, stirred up the fire and settled himself down to wait for Dick to come in.

He was most dreadfully puzzled and not a little alarmed for Dick's safety, which latter feeling increased as pipe after pipe was smoked out, and still Dick did not come.

All this time Joe had not taken off his coat nor even his hat.

The bonds were in the outside pocket, and he kept one hand upon them, fearful lest they should suddenly vanish if he were to let go.

By and by daylight came stealing into the room.

It brought no Dick with it, but it did bring increased uneasiness to Joe Rand's faithful heart.

What was to be done?

Something had surely happened to Dick.

Then the bonds, what was he to do with them?

Presently it would be time to start about his morning cleaning—in fact it was time already. He could not sit there holding on to them much longer, that was flat.

"Confound it all, I'll not keep the blame things about me," exclaimed Joe, springing to his feet. "I must go look for Dick Rollins—that's what I must do. First of all I'll take those plaguey bonds up to Baker's house. Mad or sane the bonds are his, and after all the first place to look for Dick is there."

It was broad daylight when Joe reached Mr. Baker's.

The servant was just opening the front door, and Joe, as he ran briskly up the steps saw that the snow upon them had not been disturbed.

Clearly, then, Mr. Baker had not returned, nor was he to find Dick here either.

"Is Mr. Baker in?" he asked of the servant, not knowing what else to say.

It was a simple question, but in its answer a great surprise came to honest Joe Rand.

"He is not up yet," replied the servant. "He went to bed early last night and had the doctor. If you want to see him ye must come later on."

Joe grasped the hand-rail and stared at the servant in dumb amazement.

"Wha—what is that you say?" he stammered. "Mr. Baker sick in bed! It can't be! You must be mistaken about that."

"Indeed thin an' I'm not," snapped the woman, tossing her head. "If yez want to see him why don't you come at some dacint hour. D'ye think the masther is afther risin' at dawn like some hod-carrier, barrin' the fact that it's sick in bed he is?"

"Tell him that Joe Rand from the office wants to see him—must see him at oncè."

"Indeed, an' I'll not."

"But you must. It may be a matter of life and death. Here's a quarter for you—now like a good girl don't keep me waiting any longer than you can help."

The quarter settled the business.

In another instant Joe found himself seated in the most elegantly furnished parlor he had ever entered.

Here he waited.

After an interminable time, there was a heavy step heard upon the stairs, the door opened and Mr. Baker, calm and unruffled, in morning gown and slippers, entered the room.

"Rand! You! What in the name of sense brings you here at this hour?" he exclaimed. "The servant told me your name and I thought there must be some mistake."

Joe had risen, and now stood facing Mr. Baker, so nervous that he could scarcely speak.

"I—I wanted to see you, Mr. Baker," he stammered.

"Well, well. What do you want to see me about?"

"About these, sir," said Joe, desperately, at the same time pulling his precious package from his pocket and placing it in the broker's hands.

"I found these in the snow under the wall of the Eastern Penitentiary last night, sir. I thought they might belong to you."

Mr. Baker seized the package impatiently.

At the first glance his face became deathly pale.

"Rand! Speak! In Heaven's name what is the meaning of this?" he cried. "These are the government bonds I told Dick Rollins to lock up in the safe when I left the office last night!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BONDS AND NOT THE BONDS.

"That's what I thought, sir," said Joe Rand. "I thought they were your bonds, Mr. Baker, that's why I brung 'em here."

"Wha—what's all this mean?" stammered Mr. Baker, running his eyes and fingers quickly over the crisp documents, all of which Joe in his innocence had taken to be bonds. "Here are two—yes, three of the bonds I gave Dick Rollins charge of last night, the rest of these papers are a lot of worthless securities which have been kicking about the safe for the last two years. Rand, what does all this mean?"

"Ain't them the bonds you gave Dick last night?" blurted Joe, disappointment written all over his honest face.

"Three of them are. Rand—speak—has the office been broken into? Has—"

"Oh, there was no breaking done," interrupted Joe. "The safe was opened on the combination natural enough. I made sure them were your bonds, Mr. Baker; but one thing's certain, they are just as I picked them up in the snow alongside the penitentiary wall."

"What in the name of sense are you talking about, Rand? Do you mean to tell me that you found these things alongside the penitentiary wall?"

"Of course I do, sir. Just where you dropped 'em when you jumped. Say, what have you done with Dick Rollins? I'm

only a rough fellow, Mr. Baker, but Dick's my friend, and if anything has happened to him——"

"Stop! stop!" cried Mr. Baker, staring at Joe with an expression of amazement. "I never thought you drank, Rand. Better give it up, it's a bad habit. Now, then, quiet down, there's a good fellow, and tell me how you came in possession of these things."

"Look a-here, Mr. Baker; you just hold up a bit and answer me a few questions," he said decidedly. "I don't drink, and I won't be accused of it, nuther. Fust of all, were you not out to the Eastern Penitentiary last night?"

"Most certainly not," answered the broker, striving to keep his temper.

"Whew!" whistled Joe. "But I saw you at two o'clock this morning out at the Eastern Penitentiary dancing on the top of the wall!"

"Now upon my word this is too much!" roared the broker, losing his patience at last. "You are either mad or drunk, I don't care which. Evidently you have broken into my safe and——"

"Hold on, hold on!" stammered Joe. "There's something all wrong here, Mr. Baker. Let me tell my story, from beginning to end. You are as much interested in this business as me."

And Joe told it all.

Mr. Baker controlled his temper and listened quietly until he ceased to speak. The evident sincerity of the young man seemed to impress him. In fact no one could have looked into Joe's honest eyes or listened to his earnest manner doubting that he spoke other than the truth.

"This is certainly the most remarkable thing I ever heard of," said the broker slowly. "My safe opened at night—someone resembling myself seen under such singular circumstances. Rand, if anyone else were to tell me this I could never believe it, but I have unbounded confidence in Dick Rollins, and I know he feels the same toward you. Can this be the work of his mysterious enemy? Now I come to think, he claimed a year ago to have seen a man strongly resembling his father enter my office—I—why, really I don't know what to do or say!"

"We must do something," said Joe, decidedly. "If you swear it was not you we saw, why then Dick Rollins is in trouble. We must go to the police, Mr. Baker——"

"We must go to the office first," interrupted the broker, uneasily. "The loss of these bonds is no trifling matter. Stay where you are until I have time to swallow a mouthful of breakfast, and we will go together. Meanwhile one question. What sort of a looking person was this girl?"

Joe described her as well as he could.

"Hum!" mused Mr. Baker. "Dear me! Can it be possible?—wait here, Rand, and I will be ready in no time at all."

No time at all meant over half an hour. In spite of his ever increasing anxiety on Dick's account, Joe waited in the parlor. When at last Mr. Baker returned he was dressed for the street. A carriage stood at the door, and a few moments later they were seated inside and moving rapidly downtown.

Convinced now that it was not Mr. Baker whom they had seen the night before, Joe found himself in such a state of perplexity that he could scarcely think, much less speak.

Nor was the latter necessary.

The carriage had scarcely moved away from the door when Mr. Baker began questioning him eagerly—in fact, before they reached the office he had made Joe tell his story all over again.

"Rand, I don't know what to make of this," he said, uneasily, at last. "It looks very much, as you say, as though there was some conspiracy against Dick Rollins. By the way, has he told you about his private affairs?"

"He has told me everything, sir. Dick and me are like brothers."

"This person who bears such a remarkable resemblance to his father—have you ever seen him?"

"No, sir."

"I am beginning to wonder if we have not been deceived," continued Mr. Baker, in a troubled voice. "Probably Dick has told you that we sold out his father's property on what we supposed to be his personal order."

"Oh, yes, sir. He has told me all about it. He believes it to have been the work of this mysterious enemy. You must have seen him yourself, sir."

"Indeed I have not, Rand, and there is just where I am blaming myself. None of these orders to sell were given to me. It was Mr. Plumber who saw Mr. Rollins in each instance. It always happened that when he called I was out."

Joe said nothing. He did not like to tell Mr. Baker that he knew all about Mr. Plumber's mysterious absences, and consequently was at a loss what answer to make.

They had reached the office by this time, and, alighting, Joe followed Mr. Baker in.

"Shut the door, Rand," said the broker. "Shut it and lock it. I want to examine into this safe business a bit. If it has reached a pass where someone understands my combination, it is time I began to do something, I—what in the name of common sense is that sticking into Dick Rollins' desk?"

Now Dick's desk stood in a corner. When he and Joe had entered the office the night before neither had looked toward it, their attention being wholly occupied by the open safe.

By mere accident Mr. Baker's glance was now turned in the direction of the desk, where he beheld, to his amazement, what appeared to be a dagger standing upright upon the top, as though it had been driven into the wood.

"My conscience! What a wicked looking knife!" cried the broker as he pulled it out.

There was a sheet of paper lying upon the top of the desk through which the dagger had been thrust.

"What's this? What's this?" gasped Mr. Baker, putting on his spectacles and beginning to read the paper aloud.

"Beware, Dick Rollins! I hate you, and am going to kill you! It was I who told Mr. Badger that you were a thief and a reprobate, and had you put out of his house. It was I who accused you of setting fire to the store of Greenough & Graff, who threw you off the Callowhill street bridge, who——

"My stars! whose writing is this?"

Not just then was Joe Rand destined to hear more of this ominous missive of vengeance, for at the same instant there came a loud and impatient knocking at the door.

CHAPER XIX.

DICK AND HIS FATHER'S MYSTERIOUS DOUBLE FACE TO FACE.

Of course Dick Rollins was astonished when, running around to the front of the carriage, he saw that the box was vacant.

Before Dick had time to give the matter the least reflection the door of the carriage opened timidly and the girl stepped out into the snow.

"You—you here," she stammered. "How came——"

"Do you think I could leave you in the power of a mad-man?" cried Dick, moving to her side. "Mr. Baker! Did you see him jump off the box?"

"Mr. Baker!" she answered with a shudder, at the same time drawing her cloak more closely about her. "I—you—that is I can't— Oh, do not question me. I can tell you nothing. If you have the slightest regard for me leave me at once."

"But——"

But the girl stopped to hear nothing further.

Springing quickly to one side, she started off down Richmond street on the run.

Dick was amazed.

In fact every new development in the strange adventures of the night only served to make matters more perplexing than they had been before.

Mr. Baker had vanished, the girl was rapidly vanishing likewise.

As for Dick, he stood in the snow alongside the carriage with his hands thrust in his overcoat pockets, uncertain what course he ought to pursue.

It was very still. Even by day the locality was anything but a cheerful one. Now there did not seem to be a soul stirring.

"I'm not going to follow any woman through the streets against her will," muttered the boy. "Neither am I going to drop this business after all the trouble I've been to about it. Some one is bound to come for these horses sooner or later—I'll wait."

There were blankets lying on the box, and Dick climbed up and got them and threw them over the shivering horses.

This accomplished, he looked down the street in the direction the girl had taken, but could see nothing of her.

Filled with perplexing thoughts, he passed around to the other side of the carriage, opened the door and crept inside.

Here he waited.

Moment after moment passed, but no one came.

Continuing to watch he presently perceived the girl returning slowly, looking anxiously about her as she approached.

Dick drew back upon the seat, but still continued to watch.

Arriving in front of the carriage, the girl paused, and for a moment directed her gaze toward it.

Then she suddenly shot into a dark alley, opening off just at the end of the row, and disappeared.

It was entirely too much for Dick.

His curiosity was rapidly getting the best of him.

For a moment or two he waited; then, finding that the girl did not appear, he slipped out of the carriage and entered the alley himself.

He began to look about the alley and try to make out what sort of a place it was.

On one side stood a single house of frame, two stories in height, abutting the wall of some great factory whose front was upon the other street.

Opposite this house was a vacant lot, the alley itself ending against an angle of the factory wall.

Now, for the first time, it broke upon Dick Rollins the recollection of something that it seemed strange he should not have remembered before.

The alley, the house, the row of houses on Richmond street, in fact, had all once been his father's property—the very property sold out by Baker & Plumber—indeed, the houses had been built by Samuel Rollins himself.

Like a flash the recollection of his father's misfortunes came over him, and with it also the recollection of Mr. Baker's bonds.

He drew aside into the shadows of the vacant lot, and fixed his gaze upon the solitary house.

The girl he could see nowhere, but up on the top floor of the house he now perceived a light burning behind a drawn curtain. There were no blinds to any of the windows, and all were dark save this.

Presently shadows were thrown upon the curtain.

There were two of them.

The shadow of a man and the shadow of a woman.

That of the man seemed to be the shadow of a stout, heavy individual, not unlike Mr. Baker. As for the woman's shadow it was too indistinct for Dick to be able to make out whether it was the mysterious female in the black cloak or not.

But what were they doing, that was the question?

The larger shadow was seen to be gesticulating wildly, when all of a sudden Dick saw it seize the female shadow around the waist and away they went whirling around and around together just as though they were dancing a waltz.

At the same instant he heard a piercing scream, followed by a loud cry for help.

The cry was in a woman's voice and came from behind the drawn curtain beyond a doubt, and at the same instant the shadows disappeared.

"Heavens, I'm afraid he is trying to hurt her," thought Dick, and without stopping to reflect upon the danger to himself he dashed across the alley and ran up the steps of the house.

Meanwhile the screams continued.

"I'll save that girl if I die for it," was his thought.

And after all the man was only Mr. Baker, whom he had met familiarly every day for the past year.

That he had gone mad Dick no longer doubted, and he was prepared for the worst, when he found that the door was not even locked.

He opened it and entered the hall.

It was as dark as pitch.

Dick groped his way a step or two, and then paused to strike a match.

The screams had now ceased, but overhead a running about could be heard. The stairs proved to be directly in front of him, and without the slightest hesitation Dick dashed boldly up.

Before he had reached the top of the flight the match went out and he was again in darkness.

He was just in the act of striking a second when all at once a door flew open, a light streamed upon him, and Mr. Baker, looking wild and distraught, sprang out.

"You young rascal! Noww I've got you!" he shouted, in a voice which had a strangely unnatural yet familiar sound. "Ran into the lion's den, eh? Ha! Ha! Ha! I'll fix you this time. There'll be no bilk as there was when I tipped you over the Callowhill street bridge. Ha! Ha! Ha! No, no! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

And before Dick could raise a hand to protect himself the man had seized him around the throat, and dragging him into the room, slammed the door.

A moment and he knew no more.

Knew no more until he found himself lying flat on his back upon the floor of a room brilliantly lighted, with Mr. Baker dancing about him laughing in a most diabolical style.

"Ha! ha! ha! Not dead yet!" he shouted. "You've got more lives than a cat, but I'll fix you! Look at me! Look at me, Dick Rollins! Who do you think I am?"

Continuing to dance around him, shouting and laughing wildly, Mr. Baker suddenly pulled off his coat.

Then he pulled off another and another, until four coats lay scattered about the floor.

Next he pulled off his beard, and then removed a gray wig, clapping on a brown one.

All the while keeping up his diabolical laughter, he ran to a table and was seen to make a few quick passes over his face.

Meanwhile Dick had leaped to his feet and looked about him.

The girl was not there—there was no one present but themselves.

Dick made a dart for the door, but before he could reach it the man was upon him.

To his amazement he saw that it was no longer Mr. Baker, but the mysterious unknown.

A man who resembled his father not only in dress, but, as it seemed to Dick, in every particular of face and form.

CHAPTER XX.

AT THE MERCY OF A MADMAN.

"Ha, ha, Dick Rollins! At last I have got you! Lay your hand on the latch of that door, and I'll shoot you down like a dog!"

It was a madden shriek—a wild, maniacal yell which followed close upon these words.

It sent a thrill of terror through Dick Rollins' heart—his

pulse quickened—every drop of blood in his veins seemed turned to ice.

And no wonder.

There before him, dancing about with a cocked revolver in one hand and a huge knife in the other, was the mysterious person whose persecutions had sent Samuel Rollins to the penitentiary, and who would, perhaps, have sent Dick to join him, but for the boy's pluck and vim.

Mad he undoubtedly was now, but in all that had transpired there seemed by far too much method to be a madman's work.

"For heaven's sake who are you? What have you got against me?" gasped Dick, who had nothing but a penknife with which to defend himself. "Try and be quiet, sir—I—I won't touch the door if you don't wish it."

His only chance, as Dick saw it then, was to temporize—praying that some means of escape might be revealed.

Without paying the slightest attention to what Dick said, the man leaped upon him, and seizing him by the throat gave him a violent push over into the opposite corner of the room.

Then he locked the door and put the key in his pocket, turning as he did so and facing Dick again.

"Ha, ha, ha! Don't you know me, boy? Don't you know me? I am the King of Nowhere, first cousin to the Emperor of China and the sworn enemy of Sam Rollins, your father, whom I have sent to the penitentiary and branded as a defaulter and a thief. I could have killed you twenty—ay, a hundred times—during the past year, but I wouldn't. I'm going to get your father out of the penitentiary and make him President of the United States. He's suffered enough to atone for the wrong he did me."

There was something strangely familiar in the voice, and, as Dick came to look more closely, in the man's appearance too.

"Ha! ha! ha! Ha! ha! ha!" shrieked the maniac. "It does me good to see you crouch and tremble. I love to see men tremble before me. You are wondering who I am, no doubt. Look—behold—watch closely lest I vanish. Perhaps you don't know that I possess the power of making myself invisible whenever I choose?"

Even as he spoke he thrust the knife into one pocket and the revolver into another, threw off a fifth coat, tore aside the brown wig and—wonder of wonders! Mr. Plumber, the quiet, sedate man of business, who scarcely spoke to Dick from week's end to week's end, stood revealed.

"Mr. Plumber!" gasped the boy. "For Heaven's sake—"

"No, no. Not for Heaven's sake—for the devil's sake!" shrieked the madman, making a sudden dash at Dick, and again seizing his throat with an iron grip. "I am a man capable of assuming anyone's identity. I make it my study when these fits seize me. Come, I'll show you my workshop. I'll make you my pupil. I'll sell you to the devil, and perhaps he'll get his grip on me."

"Father! Father! For the love of Heaven let him go! Try to calm yourself, and come and let me out!"

As Dick found himself being dragged helplessly from the

room these words, shouted in agonizing accents from the adjoining apartment, fell upon his ear.

It was the girl—it could be no one else.

She was none other than Mr. Plumber's daughter then, and her position even worse, perhaps, than his own.

Dick, struggling with all his strength, sought to free himself, but in vain.

Through the dark hall and down the stairs Mr. Plumber dragged him.

A door was opened and shut, Dick was dragged down other stairs. The grip about his throat was terrible; his breath came short and fast; his senses left him even as the wild shriek of the maniac again echoed in his ears.

CHAPTER XXI.

TO THE RESCUE.

"Someone's at the door!" exclaimed Joe Rand, as the knocking was repeated. "Who can it be?"

"Open the door at once, Rand," said Mr. Baker uneasily, at the same time thrusting the strange missive found upon Dick's desk into his pocket. "It must be a woman, and something seems to tell me——"

Now, what something seemed to tell Mr. Baker, Joe was not destined to learn, for he had already reached the door and at that moment threw it wide open.

A young girl of great beauty, enveloped from head to foot in a long waterproof cloak, staggered into the room.

"Why, it's the girl!" stammered Joe.

"Great heavens! Miriam Plumber!" gasped Mr. Baker, starting back. "My worst fears are realized. What is the matter? Speak!"

She staggered across the office floor as one intoxicated, and would have fallen had not Mr. Baker caught her, and tenderly assisted her to the chair brought by Joe Rand.

"Speak, Miriam; what is it, my child?" he said kindly. "Is your father—that is—is he sick again?"

For an instant the girl covered her face with her hands, trembling violently but not speaking a word.

Then suddenly springing to her feet, she turned toward Mr. Baker a face so white and pitiful that hard indeed must have been his heart had he remained unmoved.

"Quick! Quick!" she cried. "Follow me to that old house in the alley off Richmond street. Father has drank until he is raving mad. He has a young man prisoner there—he may murder him—he would have murdered me, I think, but I managed to escape. Oh, Mr. Baker, don't be hard with him! I have run every step of the way."

It is the greatest wonder in the world that they were not all arrested for fast driving, for Mr. Baker's coachman forced the horses through the streets like mad.

And while the carriage went pitching about in the drifts—the snow had ceased to fall with the dawn—Miriam Plumber told her sad tale.

First she disclosed to Mr. Baker how for many years—ever since her mother's death, in fact—she had seen the love of liquor gradually growing upon her unfortunate parent.

Then she told him what he had never known before—that

in early life his partner had been an actor—a clever personator of public men upon the variety stage, and that every time he indulged in a spree he seemed to represent some prominent person, and visit hotels and places of public resort, acting out the characters he had assumed to the life.

"Oh, I ought to have told you—it would have been better if I had—last night I traced him to this house in the alley. He was dressed like you, Mr. Baker. I begged him to go to bed and let me watch over him until he could get asleep—he has not slept for a week—pity him, for he is crazy—he had some insane idea that he was responsible for someone being in the Eastern Penitentiary. He started away while I was pleading with him—I followed, but could not find him—I went to your house, but was afraid, and—and— Oh, dear! what shall we do? what shall we do?"

"Here! give me them reins!" Joe was heard to shout just then.

Crack! Crack! went the whip, and the carriage swung from Canal street into Leonard—from Leonard into Richmond, and a few moments later stopped before the row of shabby frame houses at the entrance to the alley, where another carriage and a pair of half-frozen horses stood drawn up against the curb.

There was a light smoke coming from the alley.

As Joe Rand dashed on ahead toward the solitary house, followed by Mr. Baker and Miss Plumber, the coachman bringing up the rear, it became plain that the smoke was growing more and more dense, and that it was forcing its way through two little windows under the piazza which communicated with the cellar beneath.

"Merciful Heaven! he has set the house on fire!" moaned the wretched girl, clutching the arm of her protector. "My poor father! Oh, it's too late! too late!"

"Confound her father! If he has harmed Dick Rollins I——"

It was all they heard, for with a sudden dash forward Joe had sprung up the steps and disappeared through the open door!

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

Just what transpired during the last hours of that awful night in the rooms above him Dick Rollins never knew.

When our hero regained his senses after his second encounter with his antagonist, he found himself lying upon an old mattress in one corner of an underground apartment, half basement, half cellar, so bruised and sore that he could scarcely move.

He was alone and a lighted gas jet was burning dimly, by the aid of which he could see all that the apartment contained.

With horrible slowness to Dick Rollins the moments dragged by, lengthening into hours, until through the little windows the light of dawn began to penetrate at last.

Suddenly he heard footsteps approaching, and then the sound of the door opening at the head of the stairs.

At last the maniac was coming, and Dick was ready for him, for he had armed himself with an ancient cutlass, resolved to use it if there proved to be no other way.

Posting himself behind the table, Dick waited only to see Mr. Plumber start down the stairs, which he did, after taking the precaution to lock the door behind him, when he leaped forward, brandishing his weapon, and in a loud voice commanded the man to halt.

Now, somewhere or other, Dick had heard or read that if you look a maniac straight in the eye you can make him obey in everything.

Perhaps it was true, but in this instance he did not have a chance to try it, for, no sooner did Mr. Plumber catch sight of Dick and the cutlass, than, with a wild yell, he whipped out a revolver and fired.

Had he aimed for the hand which held the cutlass?

"Ha! ha! ha! Ha! ha! ha!" he shrieked, as the cutlass dropped ringing to the floor, and Dick, with disabled hand, fell backward. "You would, would you? No, no, I can't permit that. I'm a dead shot, Dick Rollins. Did I hurt your hand? Never mind. It won't matter when we are dead. I'm tired of living, and I am tired of you. I'm going to make a bonfire here, and cremate us both."

To his horror, he saw Mr. Plumber seize an old newspaper from one corner, ignite it in the gas jet, and all blazing, fling it straight at his head.

Then he lit another and flung it blazing to the floor.

"Light! More light!" he cried. "A thousand dollars a blaze! Old Baker's bonds! I took 'em from the safe! Hurrah! See 'em burn! Come on, Dick Rollins, join me in the devil's dance!"

The next thing Mr. Plumber knew Dick had flung himself upon him. With his injured hand he pressed him to the wall as far from the now blazing costumes as possible; with the other he strove to tear the bonds from his grasp, while raising his voice in one loud agonizing cry for help.

Bang! Bang! Bang.

Someone was trying to force the door, and—

"Hold him, Dick! Hold him!" roars the manly voice of Joe Rand.

* * * * *

"Did I ever wrong him?" said Mr. Rollins, bending over the cot in St. Joseph's Hospital on Girard avenue, upon which lay the dead body of Mr. Plumber, but a few weeks since one of Philadelphia's most highly-respected business men.

"Never, to my knowledge, by thought, word or deed. If he really thought so, it was but one of the many vagaries of a disordered mind."

Beside the bed knelt Miriam Plumber, with her head bowed and her hand grasping that of her dead father, weeping bitterly.

Next to her stood Mr. Baker, while Dick Rollins and his father looked sadly on from the other side.

First, however, a few brief words of explanation.

It was Joe Rand who broke in the cellar door.

It was also Joe who dragged the fainting Dick from the blazing cellar. It was Joe still who, returning at the risk of

his life—for no one else dared to enter—reappeared carrying Mr. Plumber in an unconscious condition, his clothes all in flames.

Let us not dwell on the painful scene, but simply say before drawing the curtain that when Mr. Baker bent over the unconscious form of Dick Rollins, as it lay stretched upon the snow in front of the burning house, he found the boy clutching something in his wounded hand with a death-like grip.

They were Mr. Baker's missing bonds.

This is all we have to say, except that the house burned down, and that they carried the wretched Plumber to the hospital, his weeping daughter accompanying.

For a month Mr. Plumber lingered, dying at last, after telling enough of his strange doings to show how deeply Mr. Rollins had been wronged and to bring about his instant release.

"Have I ever known a similar case?" said Dr. Duffett, the managing physician of the hospital, in response to a question from Mr. Baker, put in a few moments after the death messenger came.

"Oh, yes, I have known several, though none where the mania took just this form. Poor fellow, he has gone to his long account. I feel more sorrow for his daughter, though, than for anything else. God alone knows what is going to become of her."

Of course, Dr. Duffett was not able to look into the future.

Could he have done so he would have seen a new sign above the office of Baker & Plumber reading "Baker & Rollins."

He would have seen Joe Rand janitor, not only of that building, but two or three others besides.

He would have seen a handsome residence on West Walnut street—the most aristocratic part of the city—in which dwelt Samuel Rollins, living comfortably on his fortune restored by Mr. Baker and recovered from Mr. Plumber's estate, and over which presided as lovely a little woman as the State of Pennsylvania could produce.

Who was she?

Why Mariam Plumber, of course, now the wife of Dick Rollins, the wealthy broker, partner of Mr. Baker, who is soon to retire and leave Dick the business to himself.

All if good, Dr. Duffett were to ask the future to whom the handsome residence belonged, the answer would be, to the Smartest Boy in Philadelphia.

Dick Rollins' fight for a living is a thing of the past.

THE END.

Read "THE WHITE BOY CHIEF; or, THE TERROR OF THE NORTH PLATTE" (by An Old Scout), which will be the next number (525) of "Pluck and Luck."

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THINGS OF INTEREST.

Miss Ann G. Witherell, of Braintree, Mass., died at a Boston hospital recently as the result of being shot in the head by the discharge of a gun that stood in a rack in her sister's home. A pet dog, chasing a baseball across the floor, ran into the gun, knocked it down and discharged it.

A machine which automatically shuffles a pack of cards in an instant, with the cards concealed from sight, and which changes the position of nine out of every ten cards, is the latest mechanical device for card-players. It not only protects the cards from injury, but gives an absolutely square deal shuffle. The machine weighs four pounds, and attaches in a moment to any table. It is about twelve inches high.

The United States is likely to adopt an idea from the practice of Mexico and Liberia, where the names of cities and towns are engraved upon their postage stamps. It is now proposed to issue stamps for the 6,000 Presidential postoffices, each bearing the names of the offices whereat the stamps are issued, these names being printed after the stamps are engraved. Among other advantages, this change will make it much easier to trace a letter by the stamps, and make a more equitable showing as to the volume of business at the various postoffices.

Silas Cain, who lives near Glenville, Mo., was in Columbia recently, his shepherd dog being with him. In the afternoon Mr. Cain went into T. E. Paull's drug store, leaving his dog on the outside. After transacting some business, Mr. Cain left the store, but his faithful canine did not notice him. The dog waited patiently, lying upon the doorstep, and when Mr. Paull closed his store at bedtime he had not moved. Sunday morning he was still watching, and continued to watch during the whole day Sunday and all Sunday night, and up to ten o'clock Monday, when Mr. Cain returned. There is no way to express the joy manifested by the dog when he saw his master.

The ringing of a farm dinner bell by a collie saved the family of William Beattie, a farmer, from being burned to death. A fire started in one of the back rooms of the building. The dogs on the farm began barking, but no attention was paid to them. Finally the collie, which had been trained in ringing the bell for the men to come in from the field, grasped the cord attached to it. Its loud tones were heard a long way, and aroused the neighbors, as well as Beattie and his family. The collie tugged away at the rope, and the neighbors, seeing the flames, ran to the rescue of the Beatties. When the father was awakened he found the entire house burning. With difficulty he reached the room where two boys were sleeping. They were partially overcome with smoke, but the father carried them to safety.

The growth of the average finger-nail is computed to be one-thirty-second of an inch a week, or a little more than an inch and a half a year. Imagine the care taken by the aristocratic Chinese in cultivating their finger-nails, which often grow to be six or eight inches long. Just think of letting your finger-nails grow for eight years without cutting them! The finger-nails are said to grow faster in the summer than in the winter. The nail on the middle finger grows faster than any of the other nails, and that on the thumb grows slowest. It is also said that the nails on the right hand grow faster than those on the left hand. According to the rate of growth stated, the average time taken for each finger-nail to grow its full length is about four and a half months, and at this rate a man 70 years old would have renewed his nails 186 times. Taking the length of each nail as half an inch, he would have grown 7 feet 9 inches of nail on each finger, and on all his fingers and thumbs an aggregate length of 77 1-2 feet.

The following tragic story of the death of Pargana Barahabhum, khera of Dalma, is related in a native paper, called Manbhumi: Pargana Barahabhum went to his paddy field and found a herd of elephants destroying his crop. His rage rose, he shot arrows from behind a tree and he killed a young elephant. Then the greatness of his crime fell on the mind of Pargana Barahabhum, and he fled to his cottage for refuge. But the elephant's father and mother were stricken with rage, and they and their fellows charged the cottage and razed it to the ground. Pargana Barahabhum was wily, and he climbed a tree to the utmost bough. The elephants surrounded it and roared, but they could not reach Pargana Barahabhum. But their sagacity was great, and with their own trunks they brought water from the bund and they watered the ground at the foot of the tree. When they had watered well, and the earth was soft, they uprooted the tree. Then they avenged the death of their young by trampling the life out of Pargana Barahabhum.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

"She has wonderful control of her voice." "Yes; she can do everything with it but stop it."

"De rich can't take dey money ter heaven wid 'um," said Brother Williams. "No," replied Brother Dickey, "an' hit do look lak' dey can't turn it loose down here."

In the fastnesses of the Adirondacks social functions in which the natives figure are few and far between. These events are chronicled far and wide, planned for weeks in advance, and form the topic of conversation for weeks afterward. Recently the wife of one of the leading citizens of a small town in Franklin County issued invitations for a reception to be held at her home. These invitations were sent out about two weeks in advance, and the whole countryside discussed the probabilities of the entertainment with great interest. Among the invited guests were two sisters, daughters of an aged farmer in the vicinity. This farmer, sad to relate, died two days before the day set for the reception. The hostess of the reception heard of the death, and also learned that the funeral had been fixed for three o'clock of the same afternoon on which she was to receive her guests. The hour of the reception had been fixed for five o'clock. In the country there is little of the fashionable delay so prevalent in more thickly settled communities, when it comes to attending social gatherings, and at five o'clock the hostess was busy shaking hands with her guests. She was amazed, in the midst of this duty, to see the two fatherless sisters advancing upon her. For a moment her surprise rendered her speechless. Then she gasped out, as she shook hands with the girls: "I hardly expected to see you here this afternoon!" "Well," said the elder sister, "we did have to hurry."

The Tell-Tale Notches.

By COL. RALPH FENTON.

A little more than twenty-five years ago, a prominent merchant of the city of W—, in the far-famed Wyoming Valley, made classic in history and song, was found murdered in a cove of woods just west of the bridge that crosses the Susquehanna.

The discovery threw the community into the wildest excitement.

The body was found in some thickly tangled wild growth of shrubbery near the bank of the river. For more than a hundred yards there were traces of the body having been dragged through the brush and grass, along which were bloodstains and shreds of clothing.

Evidences of a fierce struggle having taken place before the victim succumbed could be seen all around the spot where the murder occurred. The skull of the murdered man was fractured by a blow from something that must have been like a club. On the forehead was the clear imprint of a man's boot-heel.

Perhaps no crime that has been committed in that section of the State has ever awakened so much public attention or aroused greater indignation.

A few days after the startling affair, an excursion took place down the river, in which most of the young people joined.

I was among the number.

Being the son of a clergyman of the place, and pretty free and social in my ways, I was quite popular with the young ladies and gentlemen of the place.

During the trip down to what is called the Dam, a young colored boy, a servant of Judge Hollenback, came up to me, and addressing me familiarly, as he had heard others of the company do, asked:

"Jim, have you got a knife?"

"Yes, Sam," I replied.

"Will yer loan it to me? I'se want ter cut something."

"Certainly; but don't forget to return it," I quickly said, as I handed it to him, and thought no more about it in the excitement of the young company.

The day passed, and we returned to the city without me ever missing my knife till I reached home. I was too tired to go downtown that night, and concluded I would go down in the morning to Judge Hollenback's and get my knife from Sam Brown. When I met him I asked:

"Sam, where's my knife?"

"Why, de judge tuk it from me this mornin'. He seed me whittlin' wid it when he cum out to de stable, an' he says, 'Sam, whar did yer git dat knife?' I tole him dat it was Jim Burleigh's, an' as how yer loaned it to me yesterday. Den he tuk de knife and de stick I was whittlin' from me, an' walked right into de house widout sayin' nuthin'."

"Well, Sam, I'll break your bones for you if you don't get it for me in a day," I replied, for I felt that the young darky was trying to play a game on me, and was adopting that plan, or excuse, to defraud me of my knife.

After several more threats, we parted company, and I returned home, went to my room, where I found my room-mate and constant companion, Dick Sanders, comfortably lounging in an arm-chair, smoking.

"Hello, Jim!" he inquired, without moving from his position, and puffing away. "Where have you been?"

"Down to Judge Hollenback's."

"Not to see Gerty, his daughter, I suppose?" quizzingly put in Dick.

"No. That confounded darky borrowed my knife yesterday, and didn't return it. He says now that the judge took it from him this morning, and didn't return it. I think he lies."

"The judge took it from him, eh? That's queer. Doesn't he allow Sam to have a knife?"

"I suppose not. He's hacking everything to pieces when he has one. I'll get that back or I'll lick him; that's certain."

"Then you'll incur the displeasure of Gerty Hollenback. Sam is her pet, you know. But, Jim," continued Dick Sanders, jumping to his feet, "you must get that knife back. You've carried it a good while, and you must prize it very highly, for old associations' sake."

"James, come down," came a voice through the hall and up the stairway. It was that of my sister, Jennie Burleigh. It was not her natural voice; it seemed filled with trembling and alarm. "Come, James, quick! You are wanted."

Immediately I descended the stairway, and was confronted by Sheriff Clark and a posse of men.

"James Burleigh," said Sheriff Clark, in a subdued and sympathetic voice, that was far removed from stern officialism, "I have a warrant for your arrest. You are suspected of having murdered James Sutherland, and it is my duty to arrest and commit you till you are brought before the Grand Jury."

For a few moments there was a perfect silence, which was at last broken by the sobs of my mother.

"My son guilty—of murder! That cannot be! No, no! Surely there is some mistake here!"

"Oh, Mr. Clark!" cried Jennie, as if her heart would break, "don't take James to prison. He is not guilty of so great a crime."

Maintaining as best I could, under the circumstances, my composure and self-possession, I tried to quiet my friends by assurances that I was innocent, and went with the officers to the county jail.

The news soon spread that the murderer of James Sutherland had been found, and the populace literally flocked from their houses into the streets, and gathered in great numbers around the jail.

"Jim Burleigh is the murderer! Jim Burleigh is the murderer!" passed from lip to lip, and was repeated with more or less vehemence as each felt inclined to believe or disbelieve.

At any rate, the excitement reached a fever point; and some threw out hints of lynching if the proof, whatever it was, seemed strong enough to mark me as the guilty person. During the days of my imprisonment following the preliminary examination before the Grand Jury, and while awaiting my trial, I had sufficient time to reflect upon the unfortunate position in which I was placed, and to detect the keen sorrow of my friends.

At first I chafed and fretted over my confinement, but that I found was useless, so that, as the weeks rolled by, with a sort of philosophic contentment I resolved to await my trial. My hope buoyed me up, that I was only a victim of circumstances, which time might show to be the case.

When the time for the trial came, the courthouse was crowded with people.

Timid and sensitive, I shrank from the morbid gaze of people who looked upon me as a murderer.

During the trial, Judge Hollenback, who had formerly presided in that same court, was called to the witness-stand.

The prosecuting attorney asked:

"Judge Hollenback, do you recognize this knife?"

"I do."

"Where did you ever see it before?"

"In the hands of my colored servant, Samuel Brown. I saw him using it one morning, and took it and the stick he was cutting from him."

"Is this the same knife? Examine it."

Judge Hollenback took the knife and carefully examined it.

"How do you distinguish it?"

"By its general appearance, and by two notches on the large blade. It was this that attracted my attention when I first looked at it."

"For what reason?"

"Because it started a theory in my mind concerning the murder of James Sutherland. Just at that time I was examining the stout green stick which was used as a club to kill Mr. Sutherland. Across the sectional surfaces at both ends of the stick were two bruised lines running transversely, but both lines were parallel to each other. At once I determined that they were made by a knife that had two notches in the blade. By a singular coincidence the stick that I took from my colored boy, Sam, had precisely the same lines on the cut ends. I examined both under the microscope, and found them to be identical, the bruising of the fiber the same, and concluded that those lines were made by the same instrument. That instrument was this knife."

As Judge Hollenback stepped out of the witness-stand, I could see that his evidence had made a profound sensation.

The next witness called was Samuel Brown, the colored boy.

He testified that he recognized the knife, that he had borrowed it from me on the day of the excursion; that Judge Hollenback had taken it from him.

Other witnesses were called, among them my room-mate and for years constant companion, Dick Sanders.

"Mr. Sanders," asked the prosecuting attorney, "do you recognize that knife?"

The witness hesitated to answer.

"If the court insists upon my answering, I will."

"The court insists."

"I do recognize it."

"In whose possession have you seen it?"

"In James Burleigh's."

"Have you ever seen that boot before?" holding up a boot near to the witness.

It was evident that this was an unexpected part of the testimony.

"I—I think I have," came stammering from the lips of Dick Sanders.

"Whose boot is it?"

"James Burleigh's," spoke Dick, in almost a solemn, sepulchral tone.

The evidence of the inquest was submitted, showing that the imprint of the heel and nails on the forehead corresponded with the heel and nail-tops on my boot that had just been shown to the court.

Attempts were made to discover my whereabouts on the afternoon of the murder, for it was believed that the deed was done in the afternoon.

Finally the case was closed; the counsel presented both sides in the most eloquent manner, the judge instructed the jury, who soon retired to their room.

I shall never forget the suspense of those moments.

It was worse than a thousand deaths in any form.

When the jury returned, the only word that fell upon my ears was:

"Guilty!"

It sounds to this day like a funeral knell. By some law of mental association, notwithstanding the lapse of time, it comes to me in the night hours and startles me out of sleep.

That word—"Guilty"—haunts me like an avenging Nemesis. My God! What had I done to merit such a sentence? Some conspiracy of the pit was bent on my death.

The judge pronounced the sentence of death, and I was hurried off to a murderer's cell to await my doom.

"Here is the jewelry," said Detective Buzzard, as he handed down several small cases from the ceiling. It was in Dick Sanders' room in the Burleigh Mansion.

"There seems to be something more here, too," as he continued to pass down a pair of boots, suit of clothes, a gold watch and chain, and several articles of value.

"This discovery must be kept quiet for the present," whispered Detective Jacobs, who feared that someone might hear them at work.

A jewelry store had been robbed a few days before. Dick Sanders had made the place one of his most frequent haunts, on account of his intimacy with one of the clerks. For various reasons suspicion had pointed to him as the perpetrator of the deed, and Detectives Buzzard and Jacobs were put on his track.

During his absence, and without the knowledge of a single member of the Burleigh family, they had made a careful survey of his room. They found a nicely cut piece of the ceiling that could be removed, and between the ceiling and the flooring above these treasure trove were discovered.

"We must conceal all evidence of having been here," said Jacobs, "or the game may take wing before we are ready to fire."

"Yes; I think he's about ready to take wing now. There's not a moment to lose," and the two stealthily slipped out of the back way, and were lost out of sight.

Dick Sanders was an orphan. Out of love for his parents, and sympathy for the homeless boy, the Burleighs had given him a good home and education. He was a tall, handsome, and refined gentleman in appearance.

He made frequent visits to New York, Philadelphia, and other cities, and always came back richly dressed and displaying evidences of wealth.

He roomed with their oldest son, James Burleigh. His character, manner, and morals were above suspicion. No one thought that Dick Sanders was capable of doing a mean, much less of committing a criminal act.

On the evening of the day that the detectives had visited the Burleigh home, there was a loud ring at the door-bell. The summons was answered by the servant, who escorted two gentlemen into the sitting-room.

"Is Richard Sanders in?" inquired Detective Buzzard.

"That is my name," said Dick, rising to his feet and advancing toward the detectives.

"You are wanted."

"Wanted! For what?"

"For murder!"

"For murder!" gasped Dick, clenching his fist.

"Yes—the murder of James Sutherland!"

"My son—my son James, then, is not a murderer! Thank God for that!" and the mother fell back, overcome with excitement.

Detective Jacobs then advanced, and placing his hand on Dick's shoulder, said:

"You can come with us. If it were not for the work of this day, an innocent man would have been hung."

* * * * *

My room-mate, Dick Sanders, had taken my knife, which I did not always miss, because it frequently laid about the room; he wore a pair of my boots, as we could wear each other's boots with ease, and went out and murdered James Sutherland. The new suit of clothes, Mr. Sutherland's gold watch and chain, and other articles, were among the things discovered.

I was released. Dick Sanders was tried for the crime of murder, and found guilty. Before the day of his execution he confessed—not only that crime, but a score of others, an account of which was published in pamphlet form at the time.

Instead of standing on the gallows prepared for me, Dick Sanders was swung into eternity from it.

* * * * *

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